





PETRARCH

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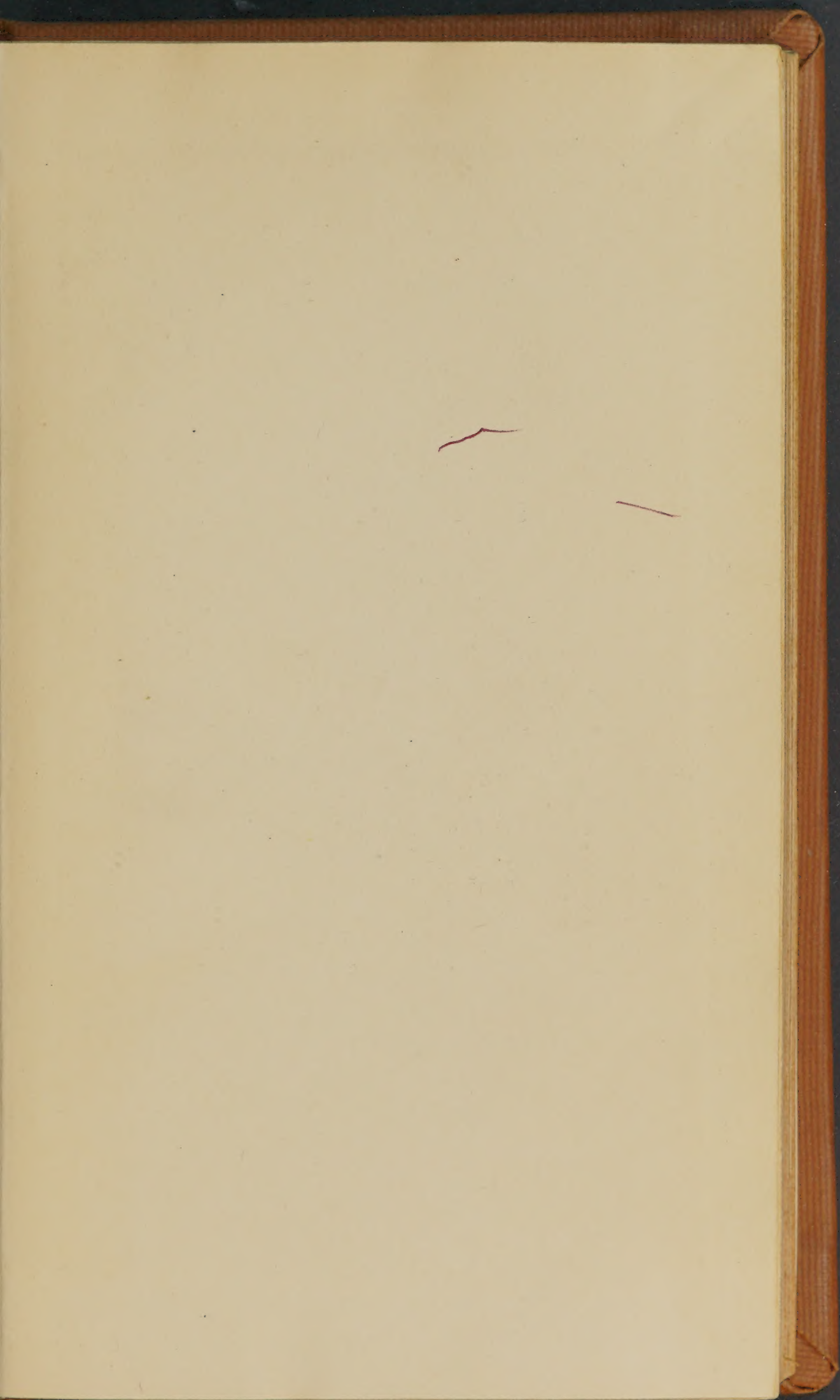




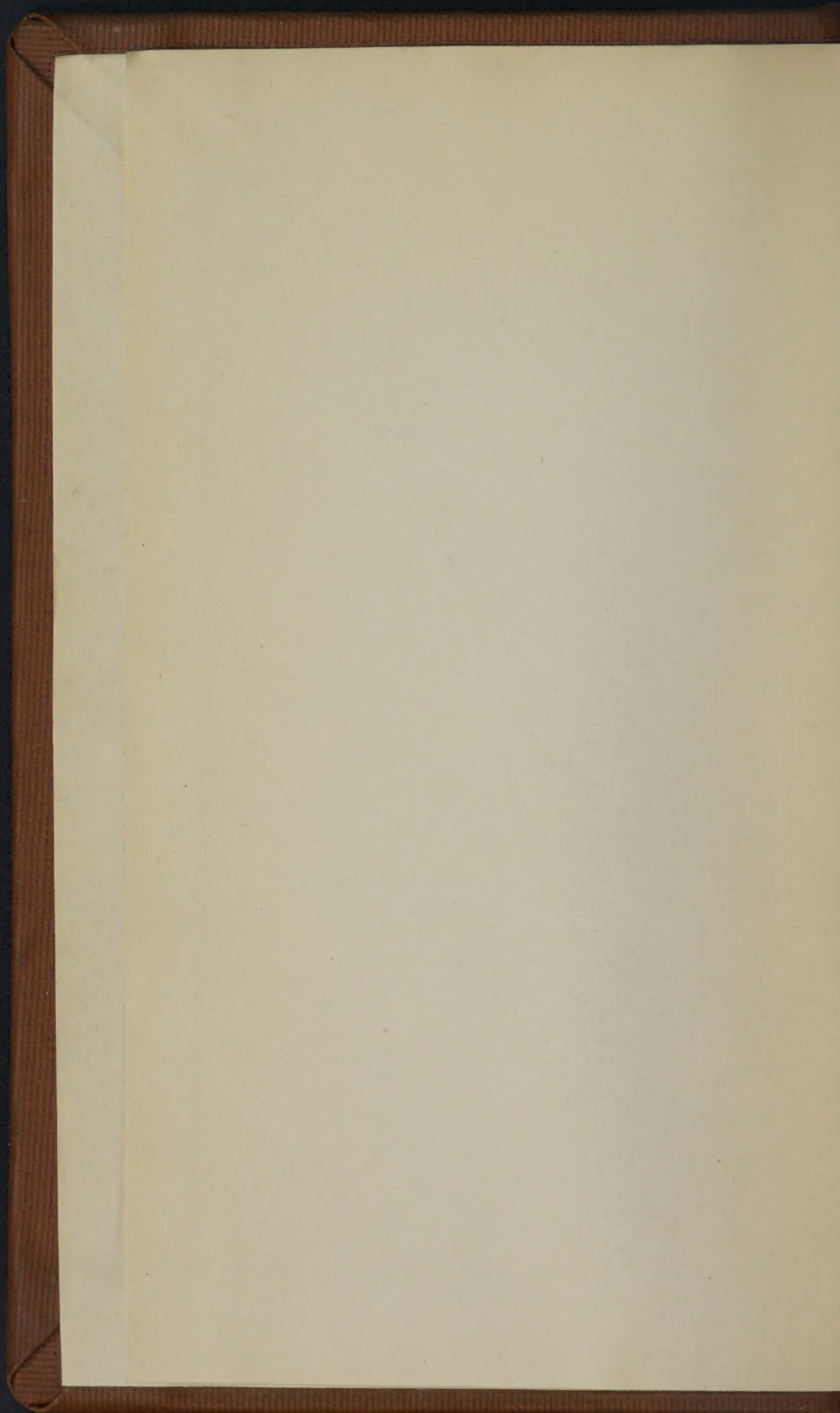


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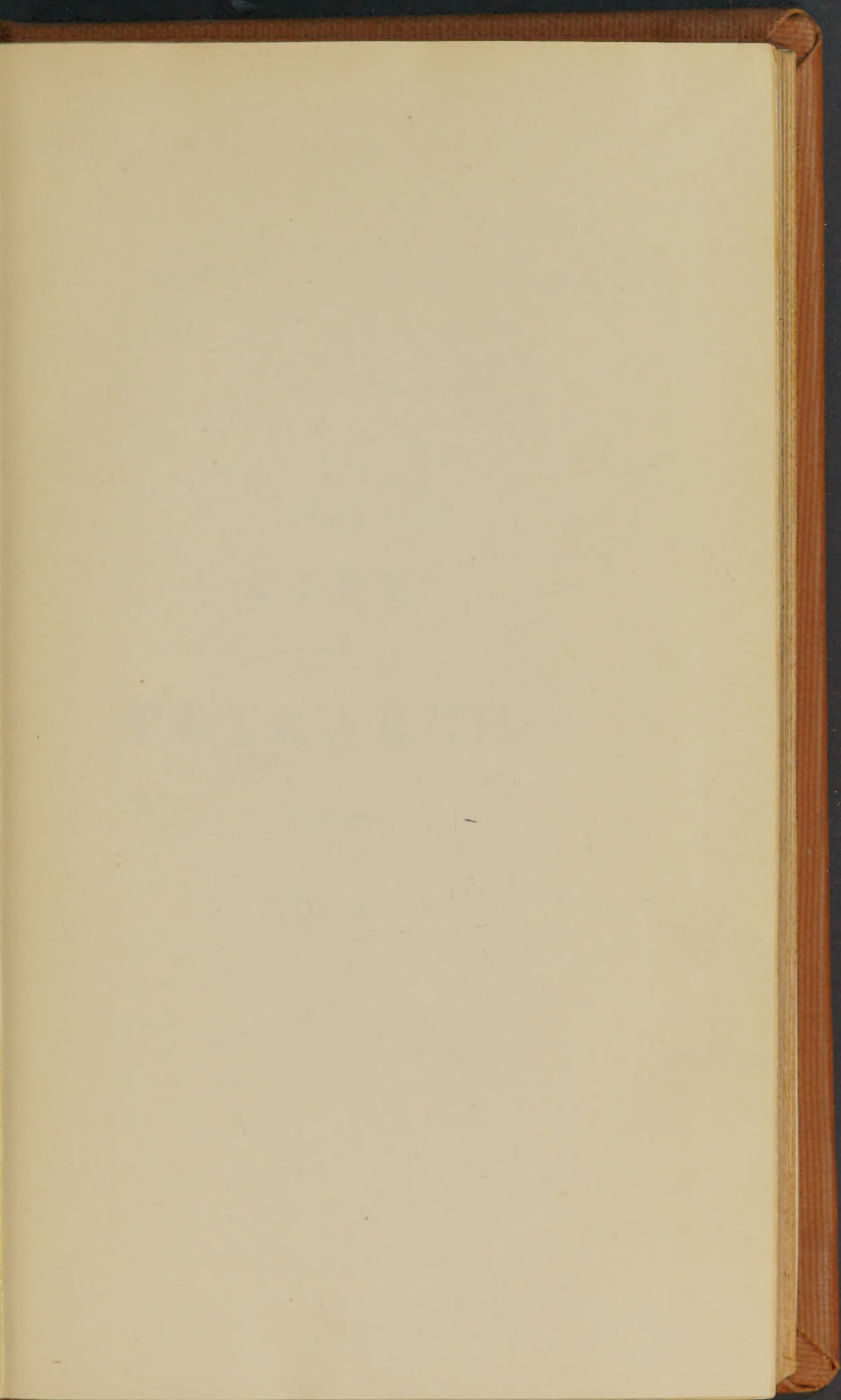




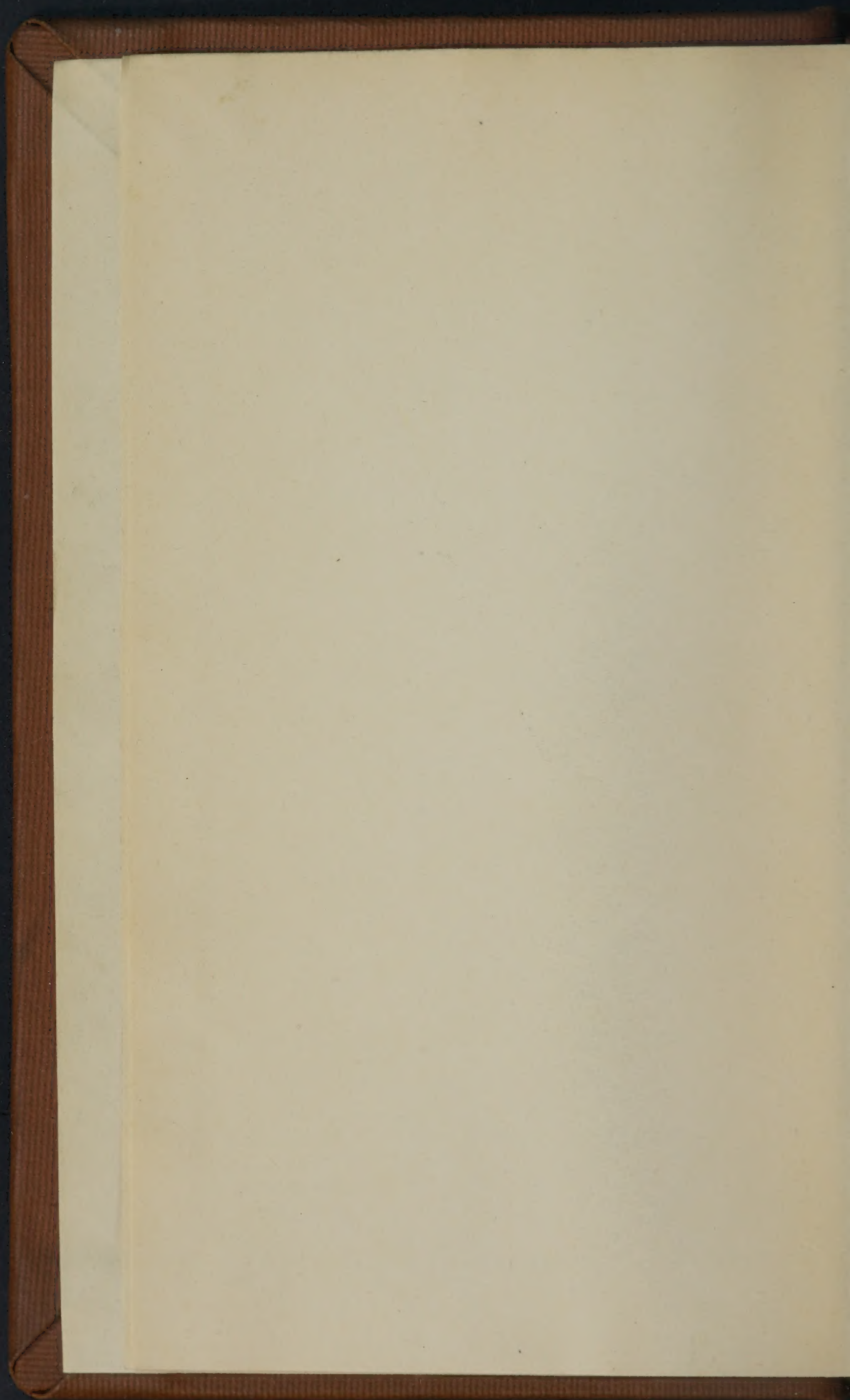














THE  
L I F E  
O F  
PETRARCH.

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VOL. I.



THE  
LIFE  
OF  
PETERARCH

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FRONTISPIECE.

Vol. 1.

VI. p. 6



Kirk delin.

Ridley sculp.

*First interview of Petrarch & Laura.*

*Published by Verner and Hood in Poultry July 21. 1797.*



Jacques de Sade

THE  
LIFE  
OF  
PETRARCH.

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COLLECTED FROM  
MEMOIRES POUR LA VIE DE PETRARCH,  
BY MRS. DOBSON.  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE FIFTH EDITION,  
EMBELLISHED WITH EIGHT COPPER-PLATES, DESIGNED BY  
KIRK, AND ENGRAVED BY RIDLEY.

Rarò magni errores nisi ex magnis ingeniis prodire.

PETRARCH.

Who is free from Love?  
All space he actuates like almighty Jove!  
He haunts us waking, haunts us in our dreams,  
With vigorous flight bursts thro' the cottage window:  
If we seek shelter from his persecution  
In the remotest corner of a forest,  
We there elude not his pursuit; for there  
With eagle wing he overtakes his prey.

LONDON,

Printed by T. Maiden, Sherbourne-Lane, Lombard-Street,

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1803.



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TO

SOAME JENYNS, Esq.

SIR,

YOU have done me great Honor in permitting me to address to you this LIFE OF PETRARCH. It is a very sincere, though inadequate, Acknowledgment for the Pleasure and Improvement I have received from your Conversation, and the many elegant and philosophical Pro-



ductions with which you have enriched the Public.

I am, SIR,

With the greatest Respect,

Your most obliged

And obedient Servant,

Liverpool,  
Feb. 8th, 1775.

SUSANNA DOBSON.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE fourteenth century, in which flourished the celebrated Poet whose life and fortunes are the subject of the following pages, may be considered in a very important light, as introductory to the clearer and brighter periods that followed.

In this age many discoveries were made, and useful arts established. The manners and customs of all Europe from this time began to wear a different aspect; and from contests and disorders arose the inestimable blessing of liberty, to the kind influence of which many states owe their present flourishing situation, whose subjects were formerly slaves. Italy, the country which gave birth to Petrarch, was at this time rich and powerful, and superior to all others in the beauties of nature and the improvements of art: and it was just rising out of the darkness of superstition; for the homage



paid to the church in the thirteenth century was carried to so high a pitch, that when cardinals and prelates appeared, persons of the first rank went before them to keep off the crowd.

This blind devotion began to decrease in this age; though by degrees scarcely perceptible, as the Roman Pontiff still retained his power, and presided at the helm of all public affairs.

But Italy, though superior to the rest of Europe in her attainments, and many other advantages, was at this period a scene of misery and devastation. This delightful country was torn to pieces by the fury of civil discord: it became a prey to the factions of the Guelphs and the Gibbelines, which arose partly from the quarrels between the popes and the emperors, and partly from struggles occasioned by the love of liberty. As the emperor had not passed the Alps for sixty years, most of the cities revolted from the empire; while they continued to be oppressed by petty tyrants, or to oppress others whom they had

conquered; and, careless both of the interests of the pope and the emperor, which they had pretended to support, thought only of aggrandizing themselves, and expelling their enemies. At the same time, the exiled of all parties waited a favorable occasion of revenge, and of overwhelming, even with the ruin of their country, those who had opposed them. The increase of these desolating evils may in a great measure be ascribed to pope Clement V. who from the love of his native country had translated the holy see to France. Rome, in particular, suffered greatly by the absence of its governor; the usurpers, who invaded it in this abandoned state, caring little for the unavailing thunders launched at them from Avignon.

Such a situation of public affairs seemed little favorable to the restoration of letters. We expect the seeds of knowledge and learning to flourish only in prosperous seasons, and under the shade of tranquillity. Nevertheless, it was in the bosom of discord, and amidst the sound of arms, that they were seen to revive and spring up together.



I will not pretend to trace all the circumstances that contributed to this happy event: I will only add, that more was due to the abilities of those great men who at that time enlightened Italy, and among whom Petrarch held the first rank, than has by some been attributed to them. Had it not been for their fine genius, the world would probably have continued much longer buried in darkness; as the valuable art of printing was not discovered till two centuries after this, and manuscripts of any worth were shut up in the cloisters.

To Petrarch we are indebted for many of these manuscripts: with infinite pains and difficulty he collected and caused them to be copied; and by his labors, and those of his contemporaries, the way was opened for the reception of those works which the Greeks about a century after this brought with them into Italy.

It would be unjust not to name some of those learned men who engaged with Petrarch in this arduous undertaking, and who, while nobles and peasants were destroying one ano-

ther, helped to lay the foundation on which the superstructure of science was built. Among these were Brunetto Latini, a very great man, though little known in the present age ; he taught rhetoric, eloquence, and philosophy.

Dante, his disciple, profited by his lessons, and composed that whimsical poem called the *Comedia*, full of sublime ideas, cutting strokes of satire, and natural beauties, which make it read to this day with admiration, notwithstanding many defects chargeable on the age in which it was written.

Cimabue and Giotto revived the animated art of painting, and drew pictures of extraordinary merit. A celebrated piece of these masters, now in the Vatican, is a St. Peter walking on the water.

John Villani, the famous historian, gave to posterity the facts that passed under his knowledge, with a fidelity and candor which ought to have served as a model to all succeeding historians.



Richard de Bury of England, in the beginning, and Malphigi of Florence, in the latter end, of this century, ought also to be mentioned; but as they are, with Boccace and several others, introduced in the following memoirs, which comprehend many of the great characters that flourished, and the particular events that passed, in this period, I will only add further, in this view of the revival of letters, that the two famous English poets, Gower and Chaucer, were also contemporaries with Petrarch. The merit of the former is little known. The various beauties interspersed in the works of Chaucer, and particularly the masterly strokes of character we find in them, though obscured by an obsolete language, and mixed with many blemishes, shew the powers of a fine imagination, great depth of knowledge, and that perfect conception of men and manners, which is the surest mark of an elevated genius. The picture he has given us of those times is, indeed, so animated, that we seem actually to converse with his characters; and are pleased to consider men like ourselves, even in the nicest resemblances, under

the different circumstances of an age so very remote.

The above remarks may serve to illustrate the character of Petrarch, so extraordinary for that time, and so very interesting even in the present. To render it the more so, I have omitted some tedious and minute discussions, which appear to me as barren of instruction as destitute of amusement; and all those private observations of my author (except that on the Decameron) which seem to be suggested to every thinking reader by the facts themselves. And with still more reason I have avoided every reflection that arose in my own mind, on the reading and translating these memoirs, except a few remarks with respect to the characters of Petrarch and Laura, particularly at the close of their lives, which I thought myself obliged to make.

And I have the rather guarded against all such prolix and intrusive digressions, that I might have room to dwell minutely upon every part of Petrarch's private character, and his admirable letters; thus to exhibit him en-



circled with his friends, and in the familiar circumstances of life. It is in these situations the heart discloses itself without disguise or reserve; all its intricacies are laid open, and we are enabled to form a true judgment of its character; an object which, next to the great Author of nature, is certainly the most important to contemplate, as a warning, or as a pattern, to the human mind.

And, perhaps, few characters have set in a stronger light the advantage of well-regulated dispositions than that of Petrarch's, from the contrast we behold in one particular of his life, and the extreme misery he suffered from the indulgence of an affection, which, though noble and delightful when justly placed, becomes a reproach and a torment to its possessor whenever directed to an improper object. For, let us not deceive ourselves or others; though (from the character of Laura) they are acquitted of all guilt in their personal intercourse, yet, as she was a married woman, it is not possible, on the principles of religion and morality, to clear them from that just censure which is due to every defection of the mind

from those laws which are the foundation of order and peace in civil society, and which are stamped with the sacred mark of divine authority.

In this particular of his character, therefore, it is sincerely hoped that Petrarch will serve as a warning to those unhappy minds who, partaking of the same feelings under the like circumstances, but not yet suffering his misery, may be led, by the contemplation of it, by a generous regard to the honor of human nature, and by a view to the approbation of that all-seeing Judge who penetrates the most secret recesses of the heart, to check every unhappy inclination in its birth, and destroy, while yet in their power, the seeds of those passions which may otherwise destroy them.

As to the cavils or censures of those who, incapable of tenderness themselves, can neither enjoy the view of it, when presented in its most perfect form, nor pity its sufferings, when, as in this work, they appear unhappily



indulged beyond the bounds of judgment and tranquillity; to such minds I make no address; well convinced, that as no callous heart can enjoy, neither will it ever be in danger of being misled by the example of Petrarch, in this tender but unfortunate circumstance of his character.

To susceptible and feeling minds alone Petrarch will be ever dear. Such, while they regret his failings, and consider them as warnings to themselves, will love his virtues; and, touched by the glowing piety, and heartfelt contrition, which often impressed his soul, will ardently desire to partake with him in those pathetic and sublime reflections, which are produced in grateful and affectionate hearts, on reviewing their own lives, and contemplating the works of God.

It is too worthy of our notice here to be omitted, that a man who was the first genius of the age in which he lived, and whose society was sought and delighted in by persons of the highest rank and learning, thought

It no derogation to his talents or politeness, to introduce sacred and moral observations both in his letters and conversation.

There is still another view in which these memoirs will, I trust, be useful and interesting to the world; I mean in the picture they so affectingly exhibit to mortals of the variation of the human mind, and the vicissitudes of health and fortune, to which, in the present state, beings like ourselves are liable in every rank and profession of life; an object so justly humbling to the pride, and touching to the heart, of man, when he beholds, *not in tame precept, but lively image*, the nothingness of all things here, and is led thereby not to rest his view on this little point of time, but to extend it far beyond, and (if I may be allowed so to express myself) *to join the line of life to the line of immortality*.

As the memoirs from which I collected this work were voluminous and expensive, and no life of Petrarch, nor any translation from his writings, has ever appeared in English, I was induced to venture this abridged Translation.



It is taken from a French compilation of the life and writings of Petrarch, collected from his Latin and Italian works, from those of contemporary writers, and some private manuscripts granted to the author by the Abbe Bandini; from the registers of the sovereign pontiffs, who were seated at Avignon, communicated to him by cardinal Torrigiani; and from the archives of the house of Sade, preserved there, in which is Laura's contract of her marriage and her will.

From these sources, some of which were not obtained by the former biographers of Petrarch, who, many of them, were also too pedantic, and fond of allegory, to write simple facts, the author of these memoirs was enabled to give a more authentic life of Petrarch than had ever appeared before. From Petrarch's letters, also in manuscript, a copy of which was granted to the author from the royal library at Paris, he obtained many rich materials for this work. 'To these,' says he, 'was I chiefly attached. The friendships of Petrarch were tender as well as sociable: he had a heart that delighted to expand; and to those

he loved, he opened its most secret folds with pleasure.' These memoirs have been spoken of with the esteem they deserve, and only charged with being rather tedious; but, in truth, this was not so easy for a writer to avoid, who had many facts to settle, as for those who should undertake to collect from these facts.

In my endeavor to be less minute, I wish I may not have failed in the spirit of the work, which I undertook chiefly with a view to the amusement of the English reader; and, considered in this light, it will, I doubt not, meet with all the candor it will require. I received so much pleasure from the perusal of it, independent of the beautiful sonnets, that I was desirous of communicating the same satisfaction to those who might choose to partake of it under this disadvantage.

As I did not think myself by any means capable of transfusing the spirit and elegance of the sonnets into any English translation, I have only inserted a few lines from some of them, as they were necessarily connected with



the subject, such as appeared from their sentiments best able to bear a prose metamorphosis, might serve to enliven the circumstances to which they refer, or illustrate the character of Petrarch, where they particularly mark the delicacy and justness of his sentiments. If any readers of the Latin and Italian works of Petrarch should condescend to look into this Translation, they will not, I hope, be displeased with this presumption, or with the great imperfections they will discover through the whole of the Work.



THE  
L I F E  
O F  
PETRARCH.

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BOOK I.

THE family of Petrarch was originally of Florence, where his ancestors had distinguished themselves by their probity, and held employments of trust and honor. Garzo, his grandfather, was a notary; a profession in higher repute at that time than the present. He was a man universally respected for his candour and the integrity of his manners. He had an excellent natural understanding; and was consulted as an oracle not only on affairs that related to his business, but on the sublimest subjects. Philosophers and learned men disdained not to apply to him; and, though he



had never studied, they admired in his answers, the sagacity of his understanding, and the rectitude of his heart. After having passed one hundred and four years in innocence and good works, Garzo died, like Plato, on the day of his birth, and in the same bed in which he was born. He had long before predicted the time of his death, which resembled a sweet and peaceful sleep. Thus he went to rest in the bosom of his family, without pain or inquietude, discoursing of God and virtue.

1300. He left three sons, one of whom was the father of our Petrarch, and engaged in the same employment with his ancestors. He had a superior genius and understanding, which would have carried him through every difficulty, to a much higher post, had fortune seconded his talents, and permitted him to give them full scope. As he was active and prudent, he was intrusted by the republic with several important commissions; and would have been appointed to higher offices, had he not been the victim of a faction, which caused him, together with Dante, (who bitterly resents this treatment in his works,) to be banished, and to pay a considerable fine.

Petrarcho, thus expelled his native city, went to Arezzo, in Tuscany, where he hired a house,

and waited for some favorable period to return to Florence.

1304. At the time of Petrarch's birth, his father was exposing his life, without success, to regain his patrimony; and his mother risking hers to bring a son into the world. The physicians and midwives thought her dead for some time: at last, however, the child appeared, and was baptised by the name of Francis, and, according to the custom there, called Francis Petrarco, or Petrarch. The pretext for his father's exile being personal, the party which governed Florence permitted the return of his wife; and she chose to retire to a little estate of her husband's at Ancise, in the valley of Arno, fourteen miles from Florence. She took the child with her, who was then only seven months old; and in passing the river Arno, he was near losing his life. His mother had entrusted him to the care of a lusty man, who, fearing his little body might be injured, held him lapped up in a cloth hung at the end of a great stick; as we see Metabus in the *Æneid* carry his daughter Camilla. In passing the river his horse fell down; and the man's eagerness to save the child had like to have destroyed them both.

1311. Petrarch was brought up by his mother



at Ancise till he was seven years old. Petrarco, his father, went from place to place to gain a maintenance; and when fortune gave him the opportunity, came secretly to visit his wife. She had two sons beside Petrarch: the one died young: the other, called Gerard, was bred up with his brother.

1313. Petrarco, after this, losing all hopes of being re-established at Florence, resolved to abandon a country ruined by war, and governed by his enemies. He went to Avignon, a city of France between Lyons and Marseilles, situated on the banks of the Rhone, where a Gascon pope had fixed the Roman see. All those Italians who were discontented with their present fortunes, or desirous of gaining better, repaired in crowds to this city. Petrarco embarked with his wife and children at Leghorn in the roughest season of the year. He arrived safely at Genoa; but, in the passage to Marseilles, so furious a tempest arose, that they were shipwrecked in sight of the port. However, by singular good fortune, not a soul perished.

The prince who was lord of Avignon at this time, was Charles II. king of Naples, whose son Robert proved so great a friend to learning and to Petrarch.

The translation of the holy see from Rome

to Avignon was a source of infinite distress to the Italians. Italy was full of discord: the Romans disputed with the pope the sovereignty of Rome: he projected a new crusade; and founded his refusal of returning to Rome on this ground, that at Avignon he could more effectually prosecute this holy design. The French, on their side, complained that the court of Rome had changed their manners, and, in the room of simplicity, had introduced luxury, murder, and every vice. Avignon was no doubt well situated for the establishment of a court; it was in the bosom of France, and, with respect to Europe, the centre of public affairs; and has always been the asylum of the sovereign pontiffs during their misfortunes. Its vicinity to Marseilles, a port of the Mediterranean, afforded an easy intercourse with Rome, which they might revisit at pleasure. The climate is fine, the air wholesome, the country beautiful, and abounding with every thing which can contribute to the plenty and delight of life. But the Italians, and particularly Petrarch, looked upon it with different eyes; and their prejudices in favor of their native country, so magnificently distinguished both by nature and art, led them to despise every thing they saw beyond the Alps.



Among others who came to settle at Avignon, was a Genoese called Settimo, who brought thither his wife, and a son of the same age with Petrarch. The parents became acquainted, and the children formed an union which was indissoluble. This friend of Petrarch was called Gui Settimo.

The amazing resort of strangers to this small city, made accommodations very dear, and not easy to be obtained. This determined several persons to fix themselves in the neighbouring towns, among whom were Petrarco and Settimo; and they gave the preference to Carpentras, a pleasant town, four leagues from Avignon. Petrarch, some time after, in a letter written to a friend, thanks God for his tranquil situation, where he had time to suck in that nourishment which prepares the mind for more solid food.

1314. At this time a Tuscan, whose name was Convenole, quitted Pisa, where he had kept a grammar school, and came to settle at Carpentras. Petrarch had been under his care when he was eight years of age. He was now very old; a simple honest man, who, though he had taught rhetoric and grammar for sixty years, possessed only the theory of his profession. He sometimes, however, thought of composing;

but scarcely had he conceived the plan, and written the preface, when he changed his design, and began another work. Petrarch compares him to the stone which sharpens knives, but is dull itself. It was from this master, however, he received the first lessons in poetry. Cardinal Colonna, afterwards the great patron of Petrarch, loved to discourse with his school-master, whose simplicity amused him. He said to him one day, 'You have had doctors, abbés, bishops, a cardinal, for your scholars! You loved them all! Among so many great persons, was there any place in your heart for our Petrarch?' The good old man could not refrain from tears at this question; declaring always, in the most solemn manner, that of all the scholars he ever had, Petrarch was the youth he most tenderly loved.

A little time after Petrarch had resumed his studies under this master, Clement V. came to Carpentras with a great number of cardinals. The air of Avignon did not agree with him; or the inquietude of his mind, occasioned by ill health, would not suffer him to rest in any place. The change, however, was not successful; on which he resolved to go to Bourdeaux, to try his native air; but was obliged to stop at a village near Avignon, where he died.



There was a great opposition of interests in the conclave, and disputes and quarrels arose between the Italians and Gascons about a new pope. These tumults, and the obsequies of Clement, were amusing objects to Petrarch, now ten years old; at a riper age they would have penetrated him with the most lively grief. Dante, whom we may consider as the forerunner of Petrarch, wrote on this occasion a fine letter to the dispersed cardinals; in which he exhorts them to reunite immediately, to stop this anarchy, so fatal to the church, and to bring back the holy see to Rome.

1317. After the departure of the cardinals, Carpentras enjoyed tranquillity. Petrarch profitted by it, gave himself entirely to study, and made astonishing progress. In the course of five years he learned as much grammar, rhetoric, and logic, as can be taught in schools to those of his age.

The father of Petrarch, and the uncle of Gui Settimo, having engaged to go together to the celebrated fountain of Vaucluse, their children were desirous of accompanying them; a curiosity very natural to persons of their age. The mother of Petrarch consented to it with difficulty. She joined to the timidity of her sex, that anxiety which is produced by extreme ten-

derness; the least thing alarmed her; and at that time the shortest journies were not taken without danger. But how could she resist the requests and caresses of a beloved child! At last she complied, and they set out for this retreat. No sooner were they arrived at the fountain, than Petrarch, enraptured with the charms of this wonderful solitude, felt an emotion which made him cry out, 'Here is a situation which suits me marvelously! Was I master of this place, I should prefer it to the finest cities!' These lively impressions were afterwards transfused through many of Petrarch's works, and have immortalized the beauties of Vacluse.

A mind like Petrarch's could not be confined in the narrow path of study which was followed in that age; he soon left his school-fellows far behind in the career of learning. Prosper, and the fables of Esop, were the only books the masters gave their scholars to teach them the Latin: and while they were torturing their brains to understand these, Petrarch, to whom they were only a pastime, already devoured the works of Cicero, which he had found among his father's books, who loved and revered that celebrated writer: and though he could not penetrate his deep



thoughts, he tasted the harmony of his language, compared with which, the style of every other author was to him discordant. In short, he conceived such a passion for these writings, that he would have stripped himself of all he had to purchase them.

1318. The time, however, came when his father thought it necessary to seek an establishment for his son. Science and letters were held in contempt even at Avignon, though the residence of the most polite and witty court in Europe. Law was the only study which led to fortune; and Petrarco, observing the talents of his son, hoped he would make a figure in this profession, and sent him, not yet fourteen years of age, to study at Montpellier; a town finely situated for health and pleasure, with a university famous for the skill of its professors, both in physic and law. The Roman law had been taught there from the twelfth century. Petrarch studied here four years; but it was so much lost time, for he could not be brought to fix his attention on such dry subjects. 'I could not,' says he, 'deprave my mind by such a system of chicanery as the present forms of law exhibit.'

Petrarco, perceiving his slow progress, sent him to Bologna, a place of still higher renown

for persons of this profession; but he succeeded no better there than at Montpellier. What a grief to Petrarco, to find that, instead of applying to the law, his son passed whole days in reading ancient authors, and, above all, the poets, with whom he was infatuated! He took a journey to Bologna, to remedy, if possible, this evil, which he apprehended would be so fatal to his son. Petrarch, who did not expect his father, ran to hide the manuscripts of Cicero, Virgil, and some other poets, of whose works he had formed a little library; depriving himself of every other enjoyment to become master of these treasures. Petrarco, having discovered the place in which they were concealed, took them out before his face, and cast them all into the fire. Petrarch, in an agony of despair, cried out as if he himself had been precipitated into the flames, which he saw devouring what was most dear to his imagination. Petrarco, who was a good man, moved by the lamentations of a beloved child, snatched Cicero and Virgil out of the fire half burnt; and holding the poet in one hand, and the orator in the other, he presented them to Petrarch, saying, 'Take them, my son! Here is Virgil, who shall console you for what you have lost: here is Cicero, who shall prepare you



for the study of the laws.' Petrarch was touched with so much goodness, and would, if possible, have gratified so kind a father; but nature was always stronger than his endeavours.

By accident he met with two of the best poets of that time among the professors at Bologna; Cino de Pistoie, who read the code; and Cecco de Asoli, who taught philosophy and astrology. Cino had three disciples, who have done him honour; Petrarch, Boccace, and Bartholi. These poets soon discovered the talents and the taste for poetry which Petrarch possessed; and, instead of opposing, they cultivated the latter, and assisted their young disciple in the pursuit of it. His desire of knowing every thing was insatiable; the surest mark of superior genius in youth.

1324. At this time he received a letter from Avignon, informing him of the death of his mother. Petrarch says, 'She was a woman of rare merit; and though very handsome, and living where much corruption of manners took place, not only her virtue had never swerved, but even calumny had never reached her. She possessed a solid and rational piety, which she shewed in attending to the duties of her station, and the care of her house.' Petrarco,

who had always lived with her in the most perfect union, felt his loss to be irreparable. He was affected with it in so lively a manner, that he languished from that time; and not being able to survive so dear a companion, died the year after, 1325. As soon as Petrarch received this melancholy news, he quitted Bologna with his brother Gerard: and they went to Avignon, to collect what their parents had left them, and to put their affairs in order.

These two orphans, without protection and experience, were much embarrassed in a city which they scarcely knew, having only passed through it occasionally; and where now neither parents nor friends remained. Their domestic affairs were in the greatest disorder, arising from the villainy of those to whom Petrarco had given them in trust, and who had appropriated most of the effects to themselves. 'To their ignorance, however,' says Petrarch, 'I owed a manuscript of Cicero: it was the most precious effect my father had left me.' Their property being thus alienated, they had recourse to the priest's habit, as the likeliest road to success.

This indifferent situation of affairs did not prevent Petrarch from a good work. Convenole, his old schoolmaster, had given up his



school, and dragged out a languishing life at Avignon, overwhelmed with age and poverty. Petrarco had assisted him during his life, and Petrarch was now the sole resource of this poor old man. He never failed to succour him in his need; and when he had no money (which was often the case) he carried his benevolence so far, as to lend him his books to pawn. This exquisite charity proved an irreparable loss to the republic of letters; for among these books were two rare manuscripts of Cicero, in which was his treatise upon glory. Petrarch asked him some time after where he had placed them, designing to redeem them himself. The old man, ashamed of what he had done, answered only with tears. Petrarch offered him money to recover them. 'Ah!' replied he, 'what an affront are you putting upon me!' Petrarch, to humor his delicacy, went no further. Some time after, Convenole went from Avignon to Prato, his native village, where he died: and the manuscripts could never be recovered. Petrarch drew up his epitaph at the request of his countrymen.

1326. The licentiousness of such a city as Avignon was very dangerous for a youth of Petrarch's free disposition and lively passions. He was now twenty-two years of age. He lived,

however, with his brother in the strictest union; and their tastes, desires, and projects, were nearly the same. Inclination led them to frequent public places, and the assemblies of the ladies; and the state of their finances put them under the disagreeable necessity of making their court to persons in favor. A considerable part of the day was often employed in dressing, and in all those minute particulars which are requisite to a polished exterior. In a letter, which Petrarch wrote to his brother, he says, 'Recollect the time when we wore white habits, on which the least spot or a plait ill placed would have been a subject of grief; when our shoes were so tight we suffered martyrdom in them; when we walked in the streets, what care to avoid the puffs of wind that would have disordered our hair, and the splashes of water that would have tarnished the gloss of our clothes.' A young man so employed could have but little leisure: that little, however, was devoted to study, and counterbalanced his devotion to the gaities of the world.

The scarceness of books rendered it difficult for Petrarch to satisfy his desire of knowledge. The manuscripts of Latin authors of the Augustan age were scarce; and of the Greek authors there were only bad translations, which



were exceedingly dear; for those who possessed them kept them shut up as a treasure. By courage, patience, and address, he often surmounted these obstacles: and it is to him we are indebted for many ancient authors, which had been lost, had he not collected them with infinite labour. Copies were taken in his presence; and sometimes he transcribed them himself, being out of patience with the tediousness and blunders of the writers he employed.

Nothing was more easy than to err in this road of genius into which Petrarch was entered. He stood in need of an enlightened guide; and he had the happiness to find such a director in John of Florence, canon of Pisa, a man respected for his age and the gravity of his manners. He had been fifty years in the office of apostolic writer, which, though a laborious employment, did not hinder him from improving his understanding by the study of the ancient authors. He had behaved, in a stormy and corrupt court, with such steady virtue as to acquire great reputation. His conversation was agreeable, and he was sought by all for his eloquence and wit. Petrarch felt of what consequence it was to please a man of such merit. Their country was the bond that

united them, if we may believe Petrarch, whose modesty gave this reason for the affection he was received with by this holy father. 'I have felt,' says he, 'in the course of my life, that the strongest of all bonds with good men is the love of their country, and hatred of it with the wicked.' It was no wonder John of Florence took a delight in such a young man as Petrarch. He looked upon him as his own son. Not content with directing him in his studies, he entered into all the particulars of his life, assisted him with his advice, and consoled him in his troubles. He exhorted him to virtue and the love of God; and praised him in all places with that warmth which friendship alone can inspire.

Petrarch, in return for all this goodness, placed an entire and unreserved confidence in his guide. He delighted to unbosom himself to his father, to confess to him his chagrins, and to acknowledge his faults. After quitting him, he looked into his own heart; he felt it more tranquil, more inspired with the love of study, more disposed to virtue. 'One day,' says he, 'I went to my father in one of those desponding moods which sometimes take hold of me. He received me with his usual kindness.



“What is the matter with you?” said he. “You seem thoughtful; and I am deceived if something has not befallen you.” “You are not mistaken, my father,” replied I: “but it is nothing new: my old cares oppress me: you know them; my heart has never been hid from you. I hoped to have risen above the crowd, and, animated by your love, to have arrived at something great. You have often told me I should be obliged to answer before God for the talents which I neglected to cultivate. With such incitements, I applied myself with ardour to study, and suffered not a moment to be lost. Yet, after all I have done to know something, I find I know nothing. Shall I quit study? Shall I enter into another course? Have pity on me, my father. Draw me out of the dreadful state I am fallen into.” In saying this I burst into tears. “Cease to afflict yourself, my child,” said he: “your condition is not so bad as it appears to you. You knew nothing at the time you thought yourself wise: and you have made a great step towards knowledge in discovering your ignorance. The veil is removed; and you now see those errors of the soul which an excess of presumption had formerly hid from your eyes. In proportion as we ascend an ele-

vated place, we discover many things we did not suspect before. Launch out into the sea, and the further you advance, the more will you be convinced of its immensity, and of the necessity of a vessel to preserve you on that element. Follow the road you have entered by my advice, and be persuaded that God will never abandon you. Those disorders are the most fatal where the evil is not perceived: to know the disease, is the first step towards a cure." These words, like an oracle, re-established my peace.'

Petrarch tells us that his mind, like his body, excelled in activity rather than strength, and in uprightness rather than solidity. Moral philosophy and poetry were his chief delight: he loved also the study of antiquity, to which he was the more inclined from an aversion to the age in which he lived. He loved history; but he could not bear the discord which reigned among historians. In doubtful parts, he determined by the probability of the facts, and the reputation of the authors. He applied himself to philosophy, without espousing any sect, because he found no system which was satisfactory. 'I love truth,' says he, 'and not sects. I am sometimes a Peripatetic, a Stoic, or an Academician, and often none of them; but—



ALWAYS A CHRISTIAN. To philosophize is to love wisdom; and the true wisdom is Jesus Christ. Let us read the historians, the poets, and the philosophers; but let us have in our hearts the gospel of Jesus Christ, in which alone is perfect wisdom and perfect happiness.' It were to be wished that those who have devoted themselves to letters had always followed this rule.

The time that Petrarch gave up to study retarded the progress of his fortune; he had as yet no patrons who could make him independent. It was necessary, therefore, to seek some more profitable situation; and one presented itself beyond his utmost hopes. He had seen, at Bologna, James Colonna; but, though they pursued the same studies, and were often together in the same schools, they formed at that time no union. It is wonderful that two young men of such similar dispositions, and whom nature seemed to have united, should at that time shew so little affection for each other. James Colonna, who remained at Bologna to finish the study of the law after Petrarch quitted that place, returned to Avignon soon after. He discovered Petrarch in the confusion of that tumultuous court; and, having informed himself more particularly about him,

he confessed that his countenance had always pleased him, and he soon admitted him into his familiar friendship. To judge of Petrarch's happiness, we must give the picture he has himself drawn of James Colonna.

'He was,' says he, 'of all men one of the most amiable. He had a noble and agreeable countenance; and a majestic air, which announced a person of dignity. He was easy in society; gay in conversation; and grave, when such a deportment was proper. He was tender and dutiful to his parents, generous and faithful to his friends, and affable and liberal to all the world. Notwithstanding his great name, and greater talents, he appeared always humble and modest; and, with a very distinguished figure, his manners were irreproachable. No one could resist his eloquence. It might be said, he held the hearts of men in his hand. Full of candour and frankness, his letters, his conversation, discovered to his friends all the movements of his soul. He was born at France during the residence of his father in that country. Nature gave him a taste for the sciences, which he had highly cultivated; but principally those relative to the ecclesiastical state. He had read the fathers, as far as they could be read in an age when manuscripts were rare;



and he gave the preference to St. Jerome.' This often engaged him in disputes with Petrarch, who was partial to St. Augustin. A man who had so much understanding and discernment, soon discovered the merits of Petrarch; who, on his part, considered it as a singular happiness to have acquired the protection and favor of such a Mécænas.

James Colonna was desirous of presenting to his parents so amiable a friend. One branch of his family was established at Avignon, and were the greatest ornaments of the court of Rome.

In the quarrels of Italy they had been great sufferers; and there is a fine passage related of Stephen, an ancestor of this Colonna. When in the heat of battle, and oppressed with numbers, one of his friends, terrified with the peril in which he saw him, ran to his aid, crying out, 'Stephen! where is your fortress?' 'Here it is,' he replied with a smile, laying his hand upon his heart. And, in fact, he had not, at that time, a single house left: Boniface had taken them all.

Petrarch speaks with the greatest freedom of this pope. 'We ought not,' says he, 'to offend the vicar of God; but Boniface had too free a tongue, and too bitter a spirit, for a suc-

cessor of Christ.' This, among other free things, he wrote in a letter addressed to one of the subsequent popes. Benedict XI. revoked the sentence against the Colonnas : and Clement V. restored the hat to the two cardinals, James and Peter Colonna, at the solicitation of the kings of England and France. From the line of Stephen Colonna arose the illustrious family which will so often appear in a very interesting light in the course of these memoirs.





## BOOK II.

1327. WE are now to enter upon a very interesting part of the life of Petrarch. About this time he felt the first emotions of that ardent, tender, and constant passion, which was ever after engraved upon his heart. The names of Petrarch and Laura can *never* be separated.

Petrarch had received from nature a very dangerous present; his figure was so distinguished as to attract universal admiration. He appears in his portraits with large and manly features, eyes full of fire, a blooming complexion, and a countenance that bespoke all the genius and fancy which shone forth in his works. In the flower of his youth, the beauties of his person were so very striking, that wherever he appeared, he was the object of attention. He possessed an understanding active and penetrating, a brilliant wit, and a fine imagination. His heart was candid and benevolent, susceptible of the most lively affections, and inspired with the noblest sentiments of liberality.

But his failings must not be concealed. His temper was, on some occasions, violent, and his passions headstrong and unruly. A warmth of constitution hurried him into irregularities, which were followed with repentance and remorse. 'I can aver,' says he, 'that from the bottom of my soul I detest such scenes.' And in another place, 'I sometimes acted with freedom, because love had not yet become an inhabitant of my breast.' No essential reproach, however, could be cast on his manners till after the twenty-third year of his age. The fear of God, the thoughts of death, the love of virtue, and those principles of religion which were inculcated by his mother, preserved him from the surrounding temptations of his earlier life.

After his return from Bologna, he passed a whole year among the numerous beauties of Avignon in a state of calm indifference. Some of these beauties were ambitious to make a conquest of so accomplished a youth. Their attentions, however, were only matter of amusement; they never reached his heart: and he was at this time, to use his own words, 'as free and wild as an untamed stag.' But, alas! the moment was fast approaching, when this boasted liberty was to be at an end. 'Love,'



says he, 'observing that his former arrows had glanced over my heart, called to his aid a lady, against whose power neither wit, strength, nor beauty, were of the least avail.'

On Sunday in the holy week, at six in the morning, the time of matins, Petrarch going to the church of the monastery of St. Claire, saw a young lady whose charms instantly fixed his attention. She was dressed in green, and her gown was embroidered with violets. Her face, her air, her gait, were something more than mortal. Her person was delicate, her eyes tender and sparkling, and her eyebrows black as ebony. Golden locks waved over her shoulders, whiter than snow; and the ringlets were interwoven by the fingers of love. Her neck was well formed, and her complexion animated by the tints of nature, which art vainly attempts to imitate. When she opened her mouth, you perceived the beauty of pearls and the sweetness of roses. She was full of graces. Nothing was so soft as her looks, so modest as her carriage, so touching as the sound of her voice. An air of gaiety and tenderness breathed around her; but so pure and happily tempered, as to inspire every beholder with the sentiments of virtue: for she was chaste as the spangled dew-drop of the morn.

‘Such,’ says Petrarch, ‘was the amiable Laura;’ and he adds:

‘Till this moment I was a stranger to love; but its brightest flame was now lighted up in my soul. Honour, virtue, and the graces; a thousand attractions, a thousand amiable conversations—These, O, Love! are thy tender ties! These are the nets in which thou hast caught me. How was it possible for me to avoid this labyrinth? a labyrinth from which I shall never escape.’

In another sonnet; ‘Hitherto I feared not love. My affections, cold as ice, formed around my heart a crystal rampart. Tears were strangers to my eyes; my sleep was undisturbed; and I saw with astonishment in others, what I had never experienced in myself. Such have I been!—Alas! what am I now?’

‘Nature formed you,’ says Petrarch, ‘the most striking model of her own power. When I first beheld you, what emotions! Nothing can efface the impression you then made. When I begin to sing of Laura, my spirits are chilled: when I open my lips, my voice falters and stops. What powers of harmony can equal such a subject?’

Various have been the opinions concerning Laura. From a comparative view of them



with the few particulars to be found of her private life, collected from the archives of the house of Sade, and from the writings of Petrarch, it appears she was the daughter of Andibert de Noves, a chevalier, and that her mother's name was Ermeffenda. The house of Noves held the first rank at Noves, a town of Provence, two leagues from Avignon; and Laura had a house in that city, where she passed a part of the year. Her father left her a handsome dowry on her marriage, which was made by her mother when she was very young with Hugues de Sade, whose family was originally of Avignon, and who held the first offices there.

From the whole behaviour of Laura, joined to these and other facts on record, as we shall hereafter see, concerning her family, it is clearly proved, she was a married woman when Petrarch first met with her at the church of the monastery of St. Claire. Had it not been so, there seems little reason for her austerity or his remorse, which arose from the indulgence of a passion too violent (as he owns in his dialogue with St. Augustin) to be caused by a pure affection of mind, as some authors have represented it: one in particular, who says that the pope, from his high esteem and love of Pe-

trarch, offered his holding certain offices in the church in conjunction with his marriage with Laura; which Petrarch refused, saying, that his affection would be sullied by the conjugal tie. One remark alone is sufficient to invalidate this author's authority. He says, that it was Urban V. who would have granted this licence to Petrarch; and Urban was not elected pope till after the death of Laura.

An old picture of Laura was brought in 1642 to cardinal Barberini, which had a long time been preserved in the house of Sade at Avignon; and Richard de Sade, then bishop of Cavillon, whose authority in this matter was undeniable, proved that this Laura of the house of Sade was the Laura of Petrarch; and that all the accounts of her as an allegorical person, or of her being at Vacluse as the mistress of Petrarch, were the invention of romancers, who drew from nothing less than facts, and mixed allegory with every thing; and who, upon examination, are found to be as ill informed in many other material circumstances concerning Petrarch as in this respecting Laura.

As so much has been said on this subject by different authors of the life of Petrarch, it seemed necessary to notice it, and mention the



authority on which the facts rest relative to the marriage and family of Laura. And this has caused us to digress too long from our history, to which we will now return.

James Colonna, the friend of Petrarch, had nobly distinguished himself in a dispute between the emperor and the pope, and had even exposed his life to the fury of the emperor's troops, which surrounded him, while he was the only man who ventured to read the pope's bull to a thousand persons assembled; and after this he boldly said, 'I oppose Lewis of Bavaria; and maintain that pope John XXII. is the catholic and legitimate pope; and that he who calls himself emperor is not so.' No one replied; and this adventurous step proved successful.

1330. The bishopric of Lombes becoming vacant, John XXII. gave it, with a dispensation on account of age, to James Colonna: a small recompense for so great a service. If the dignity was above his years, its situation in a rude village was little suitable to his rank: however, he determined to go and take possession. This prelate was extremely fond of Petrarch's society, and asked him to accompany him. 'He desired me to do that as a favour,' says Petrarch, 'which he might have command-

ed from his superiority, and the ascendancy he had over me.' Influenced by the strongest attachment to this friend, Petrarch could not refuse him any thing: besides, he had a curiosity which made travelling very agreeable, especially in such society; and he accepted with joy the proposal of the bishop of Lombes.

They set out in 1330, to go from Avignon to Lombes. They traversed Languedoc; passed Montpellier, where Petrarch had studied; Narbonne, which Cicero called the bulwark of the Roman empire, and the model of Rome itself, to Thoulouse, where they spent some days; for the love of science and letters rendered it worthy the curiosity of the bishop and of Petrarch. Martial calls it the Roman Palladium, from its taste for the polite arts. Ausonius, the famous poet of the fourth century, was brought up there. Provincial poetry was more cultivated in Languedoc than in the other provinces; and Thoulouse was considered as the principal seat of the Muses. It was in this residence at Thoulouse, and in Gascony, that Petrarch became acquainted with the works of some of their famous poets, from whom he is thought to have gathered many beauties.

In their rout from Thoulouse to Lombes,



our travellers suffered much from bad weather and dreadful roads. The situation of the town, and the pleasures it afforded, did not recompence the fatigue of their journey. Lombes is at the foot of the Pyrenean Mountains, near the source of the Garonne. The town is small, dirty, and very ill built; the country about, dry, unfruitful, and void of all prospect. The characters, customs, and conversation of the inhabitants, like their climate, uncouth, rough, and hardened: nothing could be so opposite to the Italian manners. Petrarch could not reconcile himself to them; and, besides this, he dreaded the continual thunders this country is subject to, and which are occasioned by the neighbouring mountains, collecting almost uninterrupted storms. A fine field of pleasantry this for the bishop, who loved raillery, and who often bantered Petrarch for his delicacy; though, in fact, he was astonished to find so much courage, strength, and patience, in a young man softened by the polite arts. He was pleasant also upon some grey hairs which appeared already, though he was scarce twenty-five years old. To this raillery Petrarch answered, 'It consoles me that I have this in common with the greatest men of antiquity, Cæsar, Virgil, Domitian, &c.' Petrarch found,

however, in the mansion of the bishop of Lombes, a sufficient recompense for what the rudeness of the climate and the inhabitants caused him to suffer. Among the persons whom his name, his rank, and, above all, the character, of James Colonna, attached to him, there were two whom our young poet distinguished from the rest, and with whom he formed a tender friendship.

The first was Lello, the son of Peter Stephani, a Roman gentleman, whose family had been always attached to that of Colonna. Petrarch says of him, 'His family is Roman, and noble, but of modern origin: his character, however, and manner of thinking, is that of ancient Rome. He is more ennobled by his virtues than his birth. Nature has endowed him with many talents, which he has cultivated and perfected by study: he is prudent, industrious, discreet, and faithful.' So many good qualities rendered him extremely dear to all the Colonnas. Old Stephen Colonna looked upon him as his son; his children, as their brother: and he was attached in a particular manner to the bishop of Lombes. He was much given to study from his youth; but afterwards the unsettled state of his country inclined him to take



up arms; which he quitted again in peace, to resume his books and pen. His wisdom and his fidelity determined Petrarch to give him the name of Lelius, the friend of Scipio.

The second was called Lewis: he was born near Bar le Duc, in a little country situated on the banks of the Rhine, between Brabant and a part of Holland, called Compigne. Petrarch, in respect to the place of his birth, calls him the Barbarian. 'I was astonished,' says he, 'to find in this Barbarian a cultivated mind, politeness, sweetness, and the most agreeable talents. He makes good verses, and is perfect in music: his imagination is lively, his conversation cheerful and easy. To this he joins a rectitude, and strength of soul, which renders him capable of bestowing the best advice.' The serenity of his manners, his modesty, and an equality of temper, which nothing could disturb, determined Petrarch to give him the name of Socrates.

With these three friends, Lelius, Socrates, and the bishop, Petrarch passed a delicious summer; 'almost,' says he, 'a celestial one. I cannot,' he continues afterwards, 'recall a season passed so agreeably, without regretting it: those were the most delightful days of my life:

such a chosen society was a full compensation for residing in this Gascon village, and could alone console me for the absence of Laura.'

One of his great pleasures was to see the young prelate in his episcopal office. In the flower of his age, and with an air of youth which promised nothing serious, he acquitted himself with a gravity and exactness that would have been admired in an old pontiff. When he spoke to his people, or to his clergy, he inspired and impressed their souls. From the delicacies of a Roman court, he had passed into the Pyrenean deserts, without shewing, by his air and manner, that he had changed his climate. His countenance was always gay and serene, his humour always equal; and in a little time he so entirely changed the face of the country, that this part of Gascony appeared a little Italy.

A correspondence also between the bishop and John Andre, the famous professor of the canon law at Bologna, contributed very much to the amusement of Petrarch during his residence at Lombes. This man, so celebrated in his own age, and so little known at present, was deeply versed in the civil law, but very superficial in all other knowledge; nevertheless, by a perverseness of nature not uncommon, he



wished to appear perfect in all the sciences. In his school, instead of keeping within his subject, he affected to dazzle his scholars with a vain parade of erudition, and quoted with emphasis, books whose titles alone he was acquainted with. His scholars, who knew still less than he did, admired his memory, and considered him as a prodigy of learning. The letters which Andre wrote to the bishop of Lombes, the most loved of his disciples, were in the taste of pedantry and false erudition. In them he places Plato and Cicero in the rank of poets, and makes Ennius and Statius contemporaries. The bishop amused himself with them, and desired Petrarch to write the answers. The reputation of John Andre did not impose upon Petrarch; the judgment with which he had studied, enabled him to heighten and set off the errors and anachronisms with which the professor's letters were filled, and he acquitted himself in a very artful and ingenious manner.

After having passed all the summer, and a part of the autumn, at Lombes, the bishop came back to Avignon, to see his father, who was soon expected there from Italy. He brought Petrarch with him, and presented him on his arrival to the cardinal his brother, a

man whom he loved and esteemed, and without whom he could not live. Cardinal Colonna had neither the air nor the manners of his brethren: he was the most gentle, unartful, and amiable of men; the most easy to live with: to look at him, you would suppose him ignorant of his birth and rank: his life was innocent and pure; and he was indulgent to those errors in others, from which the superiority of his own mind had kept him free. He spoke to princes, and even to the pope himself, with a liberty and frankness which gave him, during his whole life, the greatest credit and authority. A friend of letters, and of the sciences, it was his pleasure to bring together men of all countries, who had wit and knowledge; and their conversation was his greatest delight. He knew little of Petrarch; but, from the advantageous things the bishop of Lombes said of him, he gave him a very kind reception, and insisted on his coming to reside at his house.

The city of Avignon had given to the cardinal, for his use, and that of his household, a large feat, where the city hotel, and a part of the monastery of St. Lawrence, now stands.

‘What a happiness for me,’ says Petrarch, ‘that a man, so superior in every respect, never



suffered me to feel that superiority! He behaved to me like a father. A father, did I say? like a tender and indulgent brother: and I lived in his house with the same ease as I could have done in my own.' Undoubtedly this was the very situation for Petrarch: none could so perfectly suit a man of his taste. It was the rendezvous of all those strangers distinguished for their talents and learning whom the court of Rome drew to Avignon. There was much improvement in these societies, where they reasoned on all subjects with an agreeable and becoming freedom. This was one of the sources from whence Petrarch drew that prodigious variety of knowledge so astonishing in the age he lived in, and so very difficult to acquire. In these assemblies he became acquainted with the men of learning of all countries, and corresponded with many of them ever after.

1331. One of these was Richard of Bury, or Augervile, the wisest man at this time in England, who came to Avignon in this year. He was sent thither by Edward III. his pupil and his king. Edward wrote a letter to the pope, recommending to him in particular Richard of Bury, and Anthony of Befagnes, whom he had sent with an embassy to his court. The pope,

not knowing where he should find room to lodge these ambassadors as became their dignity, desired the grand master of the knights of St. John to lend him some houses dependent on their commandery. It is probable the motive of this embassy was to justify this prince with the pope for the violent part he had taken in shutting up in a castle his mother Isabella of France, and imprisoning Mortimer, the favorite of that queen. Richard of Bury had a piercing wit, a cultivated understanding, and an eager desire after every kind of knowledge: nothing could satisfy this ardor, no obstacle could stop its progress. He had given himself up to study from his youth. His genius threw light on the darkest, and his penetration fathomed the deepest, subjects. He was passionately fond of books; and laboured all his life to collect the largest library at that time in Europe. A man of such merit, and the minister and favorite of the king of England, was received with every mark of distinction in the society of cardinal Colonna.

Petrarch was happy to unite himself to so great a scholar; from whom he might receive much information, especially on the subjects of ancient history and geography, which he was then particularly studying. These two men,



equally eager to make new discoveries in science, had several conferences. Petrarch mentions one of them, which relates to the island of Thule. He wished to be informed concerning its real situation, so doubtfully spoken of by the ancients; and which the best geographers placed several days voyage to the north of England.

Richard either could not, or did not, choose to communicate any material discovery; but told Petrarch he must recur to his books when he returned home for an *eclaircissement* on this subject. His stay at Avignon was short. Edward, who could not do without him, recalled him to England soon after. On his return, he possessed all the confidence and favor of his master, who first made him Bishop of Durham, chancellor the year following, then high treasurer, and plenipotentiary for a treaty of peace with France.

Richard of Bury did in England what Petrarch did all his life in France, Italy, and Germany. He gave much of his attention, and spent a great part of his fortune, to discover the manuscripts of ancient authors, and have them copied under his immediate inspection. Richard, in a treatise he wrote on the love and choice of books, relates the incredible ex-

pence he was at to form his famous library, notwithstanding he made use of the authority which his dignity and favor with the king procured him. He mentions the arts he was obliged to use to compass his design, and informs us, that the first Greek and Hebrew grammars that ever appeared were derived from his labours. He had them composed for the English students; persuaded that, without the knowledge of these two languages, and especially the Greek, it was impossible to understand the principles of either the ancient heathen or Christian writers. And, speaking of France in this book, he says, 'The superior sciences are neglected in France, and its militia is in a languishing state.' Petrarch had not the happiness of seeing this great man again, being absent when he was sent on a second embassy to the court of Avignon, at the time the war between France and England began to break out; and Richard's numerous affairs prevented his answering the letters of Petrarch. He died in 1345; and his character has been enlarged upon, from the great importance it bore in the political, and the great use it was of to the learned, world.

Cardinal Colonna had not only a taste for Petrarch's conversation, but soon became sen-



fible of the truth and candour of his soul; and shewed him a confidence and distinction extremely flattering to the self-love of our young poet. There was a great quarrel in the cardinal's household, which was carried so far, that they came to arms. The cardinal wished to know the bottom of the affair; and, that he might be able to act with justice, he assembled all his people, and obliged them to take oath on the gospels that they would declare the whole truth. Every one, without exception, was obliged to submit to his determination: even Agapit, bishop of Luna, the brother of the cardinal, was not excused. Petrarch presenting himself, in his turn, to take the oath, the cardinal shut the book, and said, 'Oh! as to you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient.' The Athenians behaved in the same manner to Xenocrates the philosopher.

There lived with the cardinal several of his brothers, who had devoted themselves to the church; and they all seemed to dispute with each other who should shew the tenderest affection to Petrarch. An uncle also of the cardinal delighted infinitely in that love of knowledge, and taste for conversation, he perceived in him. He was called Jean de St. Vit. He was lord of Genfano, and maintained the siege of

Nepi against the army of crusaders sent there by Boniface VIII. and being constrained to surrender the place, he rambled up and down the world to avoid the fury of Boniface, the most revengeful of men. He travelled into Persia, Arabia, and Egypt: at last, tired of living this wandering life, he came back to enjoy the sweets of repose in the house of the two cardinals, James and Peter Colonna; one of whom was his nephew, the other his brother. To a mind lively and judicious, Jean de St. Vit joined a great variety of knowledge, acquired in his travels, which rendered his conversation as useful as it was agreeable.

To dissipate the chagrins of this good old man, Petrarch wrote a comedy in Latin verse, called *Philologia*, which some years after he suppressed, probably with some reason, as the subject of universal learning seems an improper one for the nature of comedy: but the motive for his writing it ought not to undergo the same fate. Petrarch did not long enjoy the society of Jean de St. Vit. This old man, almost blind, and harrassed with the gout, had a restlessness of mind, which did not permit him to remain long in the same place; and a keenness of temper, which drew upon him very powerful enemies in the court of Rome. They inveighed



against him with fury; and, notwithstanding his name, and the great credit of his family, they got him exiled to Italy, his native country. Though he might probably wish to revisit Italy and Rome, he was chagrined to do it in this manner, and submit to the triumph of his enemies. It was with sincere regret he quitted his friends at Avignon, and above all his dear Petrarch. He wrote frequently to him to express his concern for the separation, and shewed great impatience for having been detained by unfavorable winds from his place of destination. Petrarch answered these letters, full of spleen and weakness, in the tone of a philosopher and master who reproves his disciple. We are astonished that a young man of a free and gallant disposition, should address an old lord of the house of Colonna in such terms. Petrarch felt the impropriety, and therefore adds: 'Be not offended at the contrast of my life and my lessons: forget who it is that advises you. Have not you sometimes seen a physician, pale and wasted by a disease which had resisted all his art, cure another, though he could not heal himself?'

The concern of the Colonnas for the loss of this friend, was succeeded by the greatest joy on the arrival of Stephen Colonna at Avignon;

that great man, so famous for his courage and resources in the cruel extremities to which the rage of Boniface had reduced him. The troubles of Rome, which still continued, drew him this year to the court of the pope, with whom he came to concert the means of re-establishing peace in his country; and with joy seized this occasion of again seeing a part of his family. Petrarch longed impatiently to know a hero of whom he had conceived the highest idea from the voice of Fame. It has been said, that heroes lose their consequence when viewed in a familiar light: but the presence of Stephen Colonna only served to increase the admiration and respect of Petrarch, who soon insinuated himself into his heart. This gay and affable old man enjoyed the fire of Petrarch's imagination, and was much amused with his curiosity and enquiries. But the violent love Petrarch had for Rome, which the reading of Livy had confirmed into a sort of idolatry, contributed most of all to fasten the bonds that united him with Stephen Colonna. He delighted to converse with Petrarch on this subject, to speak of the grandeur of ancient Rome, where he held the first rank, and to explain to him the august and precious monuments which still subsisted.



Stephen Colonna did not make a long stay in this court; his love of his country, and his affairs, recalled him soon after to Rome. He had brought with him to Avignon, Agapit, his grandson, designed for the ecclesiastical state, to have him brought up under the inspection of the cardinal, and bishop, his uncle. These prelates joined with the father in intreating Petrarch to undertake his education. As he was fond of liberty above all things, he was much disinclined to this office; but his obligation to friends, who had overwhelmed him with favors, left him not the liberty of a refusal. This young man did not second his endeavors, or answer his great name. It must be allowed, that Petrarch's violent attachment to Laura, which was now extremely increased, rendered him not very equal to such a charge. To this interesting part of his life it is now high time to return.

He says, 'I run every where after Laura; but she flies from me as Daphne fled from Apollo.' In the sonnets of Petrarch concerning Laura, there is a perpetual allusion to the laurel and Daphne. She was the daughter of the river Peneus; the gods changed her into a laurel, to shelter her from the pursuit of Apollo, who ran after her along the banks of this







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*Petrarch Complaining of Laura*

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river. ' Since you cannot be my wife then,' said he, ' you shall at least be my laurel:' and from that time the laurel-tree was consecrated to that god.

From the laurel being consecrated to Apollo, who was the god of poetry, they afterwards crowned the poets with it. Love had so strangely united in the soul of Petrarch the idea of Laura and the laurel, from a romantic impression allowable to the poets, that, on the system of Pythagoras, he supposed the soul of Daphne, who was changed into the laurel, had passed into the body of Laura after a long succession of transmigrations. Indeed, love associated the idea of Laura with every thing he saw: he could not behold the laurel without transports, and he planted it in every place. Petrarch went often, and seated himself at the foot of one of those trees on the side of a river, a place where Laura frequently passed. The situation was delightful; it was her favorite walk. When she was not there herself, every thing around presented her image to Petrarch, and his poetical raptures re-kindled.

' On this bank, and under the shelter of this charming tree, I sing with transport the praises of Laura. The gentle murmurs of the stream



accompany my tender sighs; the refreshing shade tempers the ardor of my passion: these alone are the objects which have power to relieve my soul.'

Petrarch, notwithstanding the sufferings he underwent from the natural agitations of a tender love when the object is rarely present, yet owns that Laura behaved to him with kindness so long as he concealed the passion that was labouring in his bosom; but when she discovered it, and that he was captivated with her charms, she treated him with more severity. Not that he had dared as yet to confess his passion: love like his is not capable of declaration; but it is as impossible to hide its power as to express its force. Laura, perceiving that Petrarch followed her every where, solicitously avoided him; and when by accident they met in public, if he came up to her, she left the place immediately. The tender looks he cast upon her, determined her never to appear in his presence without a veil; and if by rare accident it was not over her face, as soon as she saw Petrarch, she made haste and covered herself. Many and lamentable were his complaints against this cruel veil, which hid from his view such admirable beauties. These rigours in the conduct of Laura

rendered Petrarch still more timid than before ; though he was always extremely so—a strong character of true love. Dazzled by the lustre of her beauty, and the magnificence of her dress, for she wore on her head a silver coronet, and tied up her hair with knots of jewels, (a prodigious magnificence for that time!) terrified also with the severity of her looks, he had not courage to speak to her. ‘Ah!’ said he to himself one day, ‘was I to see the lustre of those bright eyes extinguished by age ; those golden locks changed to silver ; the flowers painted on that complexion faded away ; was I to see Laura without her garland, without her ornamented robe ; I feel I should be more courageous. I should speak of my sufferings with confidence, and perhaps I should not then be refused her sighs.

Petrarch, though treated with so much severity, was not disheartened. Occupied constantly with the pleasing hope of seeing his beloved object, to whose house it does not appear he was at this time admitted, he went to all the festivals, and was in every place where ladies assembled. Laura appeared among those beauties who ornamented the city of Avignon, like a fine flower in the middle of a parterre, eclipsing all the rest with its lustre and the bright-



ness of its colours. What a delight to Petrarch to enjoy so lovely a sight! His affection increased; he applauded himself for so excellent a choice; nothing appeared to him so honorable as his attachment to Laura. The respect he had for her, the admiration that her virtue inspired, led him to self-reflection, and to disengage himself from some connexions little to his honor or advantage.

‘I bless the happy moment,’ says Petrarch, ‘that directed my heart to Laura. She led me to see the path of virtue, to detach my heart from base and groveling objects: from her I am inspired with that celestial flame which raises my soul to heaven, and directs it to the Supreme Cause, as the only source of happiness.’

At this time a lady, who had heard of Petrarch’s reputation, consulted him on a subject in which he was much interested. She was an Italian: her father was a man of wit and merit, and had given his daughter an education superior to what was usually bestowed on young women at that time. From her earliest years she was inspired by the Muses. The people of the world made a joke of her, and said, ‘The business of a woman is to sew and spin: cease to aspire after the poetic

laurel: lay down your pen, and take up the needle and distaff.' These words discouraged her: she was tempted to renounce poetry, yet could not determine without reluctance. In this situation she addressed herself to Petrarch in a poem, the sense of which is as follows:

'O thou! who, by a noble flight, hast arrived so early at the summit of Parnassus, tell me what part I ought to act. I would fain live after I am dead: and the Muses can alone give me the life I desire. Do you advise me to devote myself to them, or to resume my domestic employments, and shield myself from the censure of vulgar minds, who permit not our sex to aspire after the crowns of laurel or of myrtle?'

Petrarch replied thus:

'Idleness and the pleasures of the table have banished all the virtues: the whole world is changed; we have now no light to direct our way: the man inspired by the Muses is pointed at; the vile populace, who think of nothing but advancing their interest, say, "Of what use are crowns of laurel or myrtle?" Philosophy is abandoned, and goes quite naked. O thou! whom Heaven has endued with an amiable soul, be not disheartened by such advice! Fol-



low the path you have entered, though it is but little frequented.'

1332. In this year John of Luxembourg, king of Bohemia, came to Avignon to unite with the pope in subjecting all Italy, of which in part he had already made himself master. The fear of these powers in union did what the popes had for two centuries vainly attempted; it united the Guelphs and the Ghibelines to defend their country. Robert, king of Naples, of whom we shall have much to say hereafter, was the chief of the Guelph party, and joined with many other Italian princes against the king of Bohemia; and the emperor of Germany also raised up enemies who disconcerted this prince's projects, and obliged him to return, and defend his own kingdom. He left the command of his army to his son Charles, a prince sixteen years old, who had been brought up at Paris, and promised the greatest things: we shall find him, when emperor, honoring Petrarch with singular marks of favour. After the king of Bohemia had established peace in his kingdom, he came to Avignon, where he passed fifteen days in secret conferences with the pope, from whence he went to Paris, to ask assistance of Philip de

Valois, with whom he contracted a new alliance by the marriage of his daughter with Philip's eldest son: soon after which he re-entered Italy with the constable of France, and the flower of the French nobility. This redoubled the alarm of the Italians, and the grief of Petrarch, who idolized his native country, and trembled lest it should come under the dominion of slaves; for thus he called the French and the Germans. Things turned out, however, very different from what was expected, and the Italians gained a complete victory, notwithstanding the great valour of the French nobility.

Petrarch at this time formed a design of travelling: he wished to follow the example of Ulysses, Lycurgus, Solon, Plato, and Pythagoras. He thought with Homer, that it was the best plan for forming youth; and, to use his own words, that, 'we must expel ignorance by the exercise of the mind and of the body.' It was not easy for him to obtain the permission of his patrons. The bishop of Lombes proposed also to go to Rome; some family affairs required his presence, and Petrarch was to follow him. This journey was the object of his most ardent wish; but he was desirous first to survey France and Germany, where he flattered



himself with finding many good manuscripts of ancient authors. The prelate, who would not go to Rome without him, had the kindness to assure him he would wait for his return; and they shed many tears on this separation.

Petrarch could never have resolved to leave Avignon, had he experienced kinder treatment from Laura: but she had forbade him ever to see or speak to her. Scarcely, however, was he got out of the city, when he repented the step he had taken; for he felt he could not live without Laura; and he was almost determined to return immediately: at last he took courage, and continued his route.

Cardinal Colonna desired Petrarch to send him a very exact account of all he saw and heard, and to give him, without ornament or care, all that came into his mind. Only two of these letters remain. Petrarch confesses that, pushed on by the ardour of youth, he made this journey with too much precipitation, and therefore saw few things in the manner he ought. They shew, however, the pen of a master, compared with the writings of this period; and are as follows:

‘ I ran over France without any business there, from the mere impulse of curiosity. I have seen the famous capital of the Gauls,

which boasts it had Julius Cæsar for its founder. When I first entered this city, my feelings were very like those of Apuleius, when he entered for the first time into Hypate, a city of Theffaly, full of magicians, of whom he had heard many wonders. I passed some time there, eager to see and know every thing; occupied in distinguishing right and wrong, and often struck with astonishment and admiration. When the days were not long enough, I employed a part of the night in researches concerning the fabulous or true origin of this much-famed place. Paris is without doubt a great city, but much below the reputation the French have given it: for my own part, I have not any where met with so nasty a place, except Avignon. When I left Paris, I took the route of Flanders and Brabant, where the people are employed in tapestry and woollen works. I shall only speak of the principal towns, and those in which I have observed any things remarkable. Ghent is one of the largest cities in Flanders: it boasts also of having Julius Cæsar for its founder.

‘Liege is considerable from its wealth, and the number of its clergy: as I had heard there were some good manuscripts to be met with, I stopped there. Is it not singular that in so



celebrated a city, I could hardly find ink enough to copy two orations of Cicero? and what I did meet with was yellow as saffron.

‘ Aix la Chapelle is a famous city: it was here Charlemagne established the seat of his empire: he caused a temple to be built, wherein is his mausoleum, which these barbarous people revere. Near this city was a marsh, which he delighted in, where he built, on piles of wood, a palace and a church, which cost immense sums. Here he ended his life; and in this place is the temple where he was buried. He ordered that his successors should be crowned here; a practice still observed. I have profited from this situation by using the bath: the waters have the same degree of heat as those at Bois, and have very nearly the same effects.

‘ From Aix la Chapelle I went to Cologne, a city celebrated for the beauty of its situation on the banks of the Rhine, and for the number of its inhabitants. I was surprised to find so much urbanity in a city of barbarians, such honest countenances in the men, and so exact a neatness in the women. I got there in the evening. How astonished was I to find friends I had never seen; and whom I owed to a false reputation, rather than real merit! You will

be surpris'd that under this part of Heaven one should find souls inspir'd by the Muses: I do not say that there are Virgils, but I have met with several Ovids. This poet was right when he said, at the end of his *Metamorphoses*, that he should be read with pleasure wherever the Roman name was known.

' The sun was declining: and scarcely was I alighted, when these unknown friends brought me to the banks of the Rhine, to amuse me with a spectacle which is exhibited every year on the same day, and on the same place. They conducted me to a little hill, from whence I could discover all that pass'd along the river. An innumerable company of women cover'd its banks: their air, their faces, their dress, struck me. No one, who had a heart at liberty, could have defended himself from the impression of love. Alas! mine was far from a state of freedom. In the midst of the vast crowd this sight had drawn together, I was surpris'd to find neither tumult nor confusion; a great joy appear'd without licentiousness. How pleasant was it to behold these women! Their heads crown'd with flowers, their sleeves tucked up above their elbows, with a sprightly air advancing to wash their hands and arms in the river! They pronounc'd something in their language,



which appeared pleasing, but I did not understand it. Happily I found an interpreter at hand: I desired one who came with me to explain to me this ceremony. He told me it was an ancient opinion spread among the people, and particularly the women, that this lustration was necessary to remove all the calamities with which human beings are threatened in the course of the year; and when this was done, they had nothing to fear till the following year, at which time the ceremony must be renewed. "Happy," replied I, "the people who inhabit the borders of the Rhine, since this river runs away with all their miseries. How happy should we be in Italy, if the Tiber and the Po possessed the same virtue! You embark your misfortunes on the Rhine, which carries them to the English; we should willingly make the same present to the Africans and to slaves, if our rivers would be burthened with the load." After a great deal of laughing, the ceremony concluded, and we retired.

'I was five or six days in this city, remarking its antiquities and wonders. I came next to Lyons, which is a Roman colony, more ancient than Cologne. There we saw two noted rivers, the Rhone and the Saone, unite their waters to carry them with the greater expedition into our

sea. They run together to wash the banks of that city, where the Roman pontiff holds in his hand the whole human race.

‘When I arrived here this morning, I found a man of your retinue, who informed me of your brother’s departure for Rome. This news, which I did not expect, has made me feel for the first time the fatigue of my journey. I shall rest here some time, and wait till the great heats are a little abated. I write to you in a hurry, because I wish to take the opportunity of a courier who is going from hence to inform you where I am. I write to your brother, to complain of his having left me in the lurch. He was formerly my guide: I would now call him, if I dared, my deserter. Have the goodness to forward this letter to him as soon as possible.’

In this relation of Petrarch’s journey, we see that the inhabitants of modern, as well as of ancient, Rome considered all the people beyond the Alps as barbarians. And he adds, in a postscript to the cardinal,

‘I have seen fine things, it must be allowed, in the course of my journey: I have examined the manners and the customs of the countries through which I have passed; I have compared them with ours, and found nothing



which gave me cause to repent that I was born in Italy: on the contrary, the more I travel, the more I love and admire my own country.'

Petrarch departed from Cologne the last day of June. He went to Lyons, where he designed to embark on the Rhone to return to Avignon. In this route he was so incommoded with heat and dust, that he several times wished for the snows of the Alps, and the ice of the Rhine, of which Virgil speaks in his tenth Eclogue. Nevertheless, he passed through a great part of the forest of Ardenne, which contained at that time the greatest part of Flanders. No one dared to pass this forest without a guard; it was full of thieves and banditti, who set themselves in ambuscade behind the trees, from whence they shot their arrows at passengers without being perceived. And the war between the duke of Brabant and the count of Flanders, who disputed with one another the sovereignty of Malines, rendered the passage of the Ardenne still more perilous, by the inroads of soldiers from both their armies. Petrarch, however, took no guard. Alone, and without arms, he dared to traverse these gloomy forests, which no one, as he himself says, could enter without a secret horror. As he could not see a knot of trees without a poetic inspiration, it

is not to be wondered at that he should be inspired in the midst of the greatest forest in Europe; and, as he himself says, 'that love should enlighten the shades of Ardenne, where Laura appeared in every object, and was heard in every breeze.' What was his delight when, approaching Lyons, he discovered the Rhone, which, in carrying its tribute to the sea, washes the walls of that city which was ornamented by the object of his love!

Cardinal Colonna was charmed to see Petrarch again, and informed him of the reason of the bishop's unexpected departure for Rome; which was occasioned by a quarrel in Italy, in which the family of the Colonnas had great concern. This relieved the anxiety of Petrarch, whose tender love for the bishop of Lombes could not easily brook the disappointment of this separation.

1334. Petrarch, who, during the whole course of his journey, was constantly possessed with the image of Laura, had no sooner returned to Avignon, than he watched an opportunity of seeing her, flattering himself she would be more sensible of his attention. But she was still the same, and continued to treat him with that rigor of which he before so bitterly



complained. He compares Laura to the snow which has never seen the sun for years.

‘ If I am not deceived in my calculation,’ adds he, ‘ it is now seven years that I have sighed night and day for Laura, and have no hope of being ever able to touch her heart.’ The coolness of the fountain of Vaucluse, the shade of the wood which surrounded the little valley that leads to it, appeared to him the most proper situation to moderate the ardour of his mind: he went there sometimes. The most frightful deserts, the blackest forests, the most inaccessible mountains, were to him delightful abodes; but they could not shelter him from love, which followed him every where, and penetrated through the hardest rocks.

‘ The more desert and savage the scene around me, the more lively is the form in which Laura presents herself to my view. The mountains, the woods, and the streams, all see and witness my anguish: no place is so wild or savage where I am not pursued by love.’

Sometimes he called death to his succour. His health altered visibly. The idea of death, and the uncertainty of what might be his state hereafter, filled his soul with trouble. He saw all the misery of his condition: he made strong

resolutions to overcome his passion; but love was always victorious. In vain he represented to himself, that time flew swiftly over his head, that his hopes were vain and frail, and his body decaying apace; that the source of his joy and of his grief, of his disgust and of his fears, would with that be soon destroyed; and that the eye of truth would then clearly discern how little such foolish pursuits, and such frivolous pleasures, merited the attention and anxiety of human beings.

In a situation so mournful and critical, Petrarch had recourse to an Augustine monk, called Dennis de Robertis, born in the village of St. Sepulchre, near Florence. This monk entered early into that order, in which he distinguished himself by his understanding and his talents. He made a voyage to Avignon, where he attached himself to cardinal Colonna, to whom he dedicated one of his works, entitled Commentaries on Valerius Maximus. His reputation gained him an invitation to Paris, where he read lectures on philosophy and theology with great success, and shone in the principal pulpits there. He passed for an universal genius. In reality, he was an orator, a poet, a philosopher, a theologist, and a teacher. It was at Paris that Petrarch became acquainted



with this monk, and discoursed with him on the state of his soul. Father Dennis said every thing that an able adviser could say to a young man to cure him of a passion which so cruelly oppressed him. Petrarch had conceived the greatest veneration for this father; he continued to write to him to implore his advice, and to solicit remedies for the cure of his passion. Most of these letters are lost, which are greatly to be lamented: there are only a few of Petrarch's remaining, which will be dispersed through these memoirs. We shall soon see the little success of father Dennis's advice, notwithstanding his skill and his extensive knowledge: But who does not know, that one look from a beloved mistress is sufficient to destroy whole years of counsel from a ghostly father?

The city of Avignon underwent this year a very singular kind of plague. The heat and drought were so violent, that persons of every age and sex changed their skins like serpents: it fell in scales from the face, the neck, and the hands. The populace, seized as with madness, ran half naked about the streets, with whips in their hands, scourging their flesh, supplicating with the most dreadful outcries for rain, and that a stop might be put to this terrible ca-

lamity. Those who escaped this disorder, which were very few, were thought to have bodies of iron. Nothing like it had ever been remembered. The constitution of Laura was too delicate to sustain so great an intemperature in the air; she was attacked with a violent disorder, which alarmed Petrarch in a most lively manner: he asked the physician who attended her, how she was; he replied, Extremely ill; and there was every thing to fear for her. Laura recovered however, and Petrarch was relieved from his distress.

On his return from Germany, Petrarch found the pope seriously employed, at the age of fourscore and ten years, on two great projects which required all the vigor of youth. The one was the crusade, the other was the re-establishment of the holy see at Rome. The unhappy consequences of former wars undertaken against the infidels, to dispossess them of the holy places they were masters of, had cooled the pious fury which had depopulated Europe to ravage Asia. It is difficult to comprehend how a pontiff so enlightened and experienced could seriously enter on a project which, in the present situation of Europe, was so chimerical. Petrarch himself, though full of outrageous



zeal for these holy enterprises, knew all the difficulties that attended them.

Philip of Valois, king of France, sent ambassadors to the pope, to concert proper measures for this great undertaking; and they promised on oath, in the name of this prince, that he should embark in three years for the Levant, at the head of an army. The pope declared Philip the chief of this enterprize, and granted him for six years the tenths of his clergy: and after the return of the ambassadors, Philip took the cross with the greatest demonstrations of piety. This example, which was followed by almost all the princes and barons of the kingdom, and a great number of prelates, set all Europe in motion. The kings of Bohemia, Arragon, and Navarre, likewise took the cross; and the king of France promised that twenty thousand horse and thirty thousand foot should pass into the east, on board Venetian, Genoese, and Pisan, vessels.

The family of the Colonnas were more zealous than any other for the success of the holy war. In 1218 cardinal John Colonna headed the crusade, distinguished himself by his great valour, and contributed to the taking of Damietta, though he was made prisoner by the

Saracens, who condemned him to be sawed afunder; but at the moment of execution, surprised with the fortitude he discovered, they gave him his life and liberty.

The second project, of translating the holy see to Rome, was as important as the former, and more easy to be executed: but the death of the pope, which happened in 1334, put an end to this design; and the troubles that agitated Europe put an end likewise to the other.

John XXII. had governed the church eighteen years: he was a man of understanding and knowledge; had prodigious activity, and great constancy in pursuing what he once undertook; and was possessed of an immense treasure. But, notwithstanding all these resources, he could not bring to perfection any one of the projects he aimed at in the course of his long pontificate.

The first was the crusade; the second, the deposition of the emperor Lewis of Bavaria; the third, the destruction of the Gibbelines in Italy, and of the imperial authority, on the ruins of which he meant to establish his own; and the fourth, though of a very different nature, was as vigorously pursued by him as the rest.



John believed that the souls of the just would not enjoy the vision of God till after the universal judgment, and the resurrection of their bodies. 'They are,' said he, 'while waiting for this judgment, under the altar and protection of the humanity of Jesus Christ.' Astonished at the opposition made to this doctrine, he employed his authority to prove the truth of it, punishing with severity those who openly contradicted it. He put a Dominican into prison on this account; and cited Durain de St. Pourcoin, bishop of Mieux, one of the greatest theologists of his time, to appear and answer for his faith. These acts of violence incensed all the world against him. The insurrection of the cardinals, and a great part of the court of Rome; the decision of the doctors in theology at Paris; and the exhortation of the kings of France and Naples, obliged the pope to make a solemn retraction of this doctrine before his death.

Petrarch, speaking on this subject, says,

'Beatitude is a state to which nothing can be added; it is conformable to nature, that the spirit should be always in motion till there remains nothing for it to desire. How then can the dead enjoy the vision of God, in which consists the blessedness of man, while they

are desiring with ardour the reunion of their bodies?’

In a letter to Cardinal Colonna, some years after,

‘Permit me,’ says he, ‘to speak freely of a pope of whom you were fond, though not of his errors. His doctrine concerning the vision of God, however probable at the bottom, was condemned by the greatest number, and those of the best judgment, and lies buried with its author.’

After the death of John, James Fournier was elected pope, to the astonishment of all the world; and this cardinal himself, when they came to adorn him, said to those around him, ‘Your choice has fallen upon an ass.’ If we may believe Petrarch, he did himself justice; and the acknowledgment of his incapacity was the greatest proof he ever gave of his judgment.

He was a baker’s son, and took the name of Bennet XII. His figure, his shape, his voice, his manners, were entirely opposite to those of his predecessor, whose doctrine concerning the vision of God he publicly condemned. They looked upon him at the court of Avignon as a man of no consequence, and incapable of governing the church.



1335. Petrarch was at this time chaplain and official to cardinal Colonna, but he had no living: the pope gave him the canonry of Lombes, with the promise of the first vacant prebend; and in his letter speaks highly of the knowledge of Petrarch, and of the goodness of his life. It must be remarked here, that this pope left a great number of benefices unsupplied; not finding, he said, any person capable of filling them.

The troubles of Italy drew this year to Avignon Azon de Corege, a character that soon engaged the attention and friendship of Petrarch: at fifteen years of age he had entered into holy orders, but took up arms afterwards in defence of his country, and came to Avignon on a public negociation; he had the best constitution in the world; his strength was astonishing, and his body hard as iron. He was called Iron-foot, because he was indefatigable. His mind was full of ardour, and eager after all kinds of knowledge; he read a great deal, and forgot nothing: he fought earnestly the society of those who could give him any instruction, and in the hurry of the greatest affairs he always reserved some hours to enrich his mind with study. It is easy to imagine that a man of this character would be desirous

of being admitted into the assembly of cardinal Colonna, and would be well received there.

Azon de Corege had heard of Petrarch's reputation, and earnestly desired his acquaintance. As they were of the same age, and the same turn of mind, they soon entered into a very intimate friendship; and Petrarch was so happy as to have an opportunity of giving Azon a singular proof of his affection soon after his arrival at Avignon. The Coreges were deeply engaged in the public quarrels in Italy. Azon at this time had it upon his hands to defend the cause of the nobles of Verona, by whom he was sent to Avignon; to assert the rights of his family, which had been invaded; and to guard the safety of his own person, which had been assaulted. Enchanted with the genius of Petrarch, and his irresistible eloquence, he thought he could not confide his cause to an orator more able to defend it; and besought Petrarch to be his advocate. Petrarch had never taken upon him the profession of the law:

'My reputation,' said he, 'has never been so blemished as to constrain me to defend it. My profession does not oblige me to take up the vindication of others. I love solitude; I detest the bar; I despise money; and I could never



be prevailed upon to let out my tongue for hire. It is repugnant to my nature.'

What Petrarch could not do from inclination, or for interest, he did from friendship. He charged himself with the cause of Azon, and of the house of Corege. It was a very interesting one, and opened a vast field for eloquence.

Petrarch, inspired by friendship, displayed his oratory with success; and, which was still more surprising, with a temper fiery and passionate like his, he avoided with care those digressions against the adverse party, those cutting sallies of wit, which lawyers are so apt to run into, in order to shine themselves, rather than to strengthen their cause. Azon gained his suit. The lords of Verona were confirmed in the sovereignty of Parma; and Petrarch convinced the pope and the cardinals, who assisted at this assembly, that he would have been the greatest orator of his age, if he had not rather chose to be the greatest poet.

Petrarch on this occasion gained also another distinguished friend, who was colleague with Azon in this affair; his name was William de Pastrengo, born at Pastrengo, a town a few leagues distant from Verona. He had

studied the law at Padua, under the celebrated professor Oldradi. Having found out the secret of reconciling this study with that of the belles lettres, he was an orator, a poet, and a civilian.

The nobles of Verona had great confidence in Pastrengo, and committed to him the most important negociations. We have at this day a book written by him, rare and little known, full of matter on all subjects, and which shews a great fund of erudition. It was printed at Venice: the first part is on sacred and profane history; the second, an historical and geographical dictionary, which treats of the origin of things. He was, with all this learning, a man of gallantry, and well versed in the methods of making himself agreeable in conversation. His love of the belles lettres united him with Petrarch in a very sincere friendship.

The bishop of Lombes, whom family affairs retained at Rome, desired extremely to see his dear Petrarch in that great city, and never ceased pressing him in his letters to undertake the journey. It cannot be doubted that Petrarch wished much to go; many objects attracted him; but he was prevented by his passion for Laura on one hand, and his attach-



ment to the cardinal on the other, who would not suffer him to leave Avignon. He excused himself on these accounts to the bishop of Lombes, assuring him, these were the only reasons he did not comply with his tender and pressing invitations. He adds in his letter to the bishop, who had wrote with pleasantry on Laura,

‘ Would to God that my Laura was an imaginary person! and that my passion for her was only a jest! Alas! it is a frenzy! We may counterfeit sickness by voice and gesture, but we cannot give ourselves the air and color of a sick person. How many times have you witnessed the paleness of my countenance, and the agonies of my heart? I feel you speak ironically; irony is your favorite figure; but I hope I shall be cured of my disorder, and that time will close up my wound.’

He adds,

‘ Your kind attentions flatter my self-love! I do not know from whence the high ideas have been taken which certain persons have conceived of me. But this favorable prejudice has been my happy destiny from my cradle. I have been always more known than I desired; many things bad and good have been said of me; I was not elated by the one, or depressed

by the other; for I have been long convinced, that the world is false and deceitful, and that my life is but a dream. I have been torn to pieces by the pleasantries of my friends on my passion for Laura; to put balm into the wound, you exhort me to love you. Alas! you well know that in love I require a rein rather than a spur. I should be more tranquil had I less sensibility.'

1336. This year, at the end of April, Petrarch, always curious and eager to see new objects, took a journey to Mount Ventoux. This is one of the highest mountains in Europe, and having few hills near it so lofty as to intercept the prospect, it presents from its summit a more extensive view than can be seen from the Alps or the Pyrennees. Petrarch gives this account of his journey in a letter to father Dennis:

' Having passed my youth in the province of Venaissin, I have always had a desire to visit a mountain which is descried from all parts, and which is so properly called the Mountain of the Winds. I sought a companion for this expedition; and, what will appear singular, among the number of friends that I had, I met with none quite suited to my mind: so true is it, that it is rare to find, even among persons



who love one another the best, a perfect conformity in taste, inclination, and manner of thinking. One appeared to me too quick, another too slow; I found this man too lively, the other too dull: there is one, said I to myself, too tender, and too delicate, to sustain the fatigue; there is another too fat, and too heavy, he can never get up so high: in fine, this is too petulant and noisy, the other too silent and melancholy. All these defects, which friendship can support in a town, and in a house, would be intolerable on a journey. I weighed this matter, and finding that those whose society would have pleased me, either had affairs which prevented them, or had not the same curiosity as myself, I would not put their complaisance to the proof. I determined to take with me my brother Gerard, whom you know. He was very glad to accompany me, and felt a sensible joy in supplying the place of a friend as well as a brother.

‘ We went from Avignon to Malaucene, which is at the foot of the mountain on the north side, where we slept the night, and reposed ourselves the whole of the next day. The day after, my brother and myself, followed by two domestics, ascended the mountain with much trouble and fatigue, though

the weather was mild, and the day very fine. We had agility, strength, and courage; nothing was wanting; but this mass of rocks is of a steepness almost inaccessible. Towards the middle of the mountain we found an old shepherd, who did all he could to divert us from our project. "It is about fifty years ago," said he, "that I had the same humour with yourselves; I climbed to the top of the mountain, and what did I get by it?—My body and my clothes torn to pieces by the briars, much fatigue and repentance, with a firm resolution never to go thither again. Since that time I have not heard it said that any one has been guilty of the same folly."

'Young people are not to be talked out of their schemes. The more the shepherd exaggerated the difficulties of the enterprise, the stronger desire we felt to conquer them. When he saw that what he said had no effect, he shewed us a steep path along the rocks: "That is the way you must go," said he.

'After leaving our clothes, and all that could embarrass us, we began to climb with inconceivable ardor. Our first efforts, which is not uncommon, were followed with extreme weakness: we found a rock, on which we rested some time; after which we resumed



our march, but it was not with the same agility; mine slackened very much. While my brother followed a very steep path which appeared to lead to the top, I took another which was more upon the declivity. "Where are you going?" cried my brother with all his might; "that is not the way, follow me." "Let me alone," said I; "I prefer the path that is longest and easiest." This was an excuse for my weakness. I wandered for some time at the bottom; at last shame took hold of me, and I rejoined my brother, who was sat down to wait for me. We marched one before another some time, but I became weary again, and sought an easier path; and at last, overwhelmed with shame and fatigue, I stopped again to take breath. Then, abandoning myself to reflection, I compared the state of my soul, which desires to gain heaven, but walks not in the way to it, to that of my body, which had so much difficulty in attaining the top of Mount Ventoux, notwithstanding the curiosity which caused me to attempt it. These reflections inspired me with more strength and courage.

Mount Ventoux is divided into several hills, which rise one above the other; on the

top of the highest is a little plain, where we seated ourselves on our arrival.

‘Struck with the clearness of the air, and the immense space I had before my eyes, I remained for some time motionless and astonished. At last, waking from my reverie, my eyes were insensibly directed toward that fine country to which my inclination always drew me. I saw those mountains covered with snow, where the proud enemy of the Romans opened himself a passage with vinegar, if we may believe the voice of Fame. Though they are at a great distance from Mount Ventoux, they seemed so near that one might touch them. I felt instantly a vehement desire to behold again this dear country, which I saw rather with the eyes of the soul than those of the body: some sighs escaped me, which I could not prevent, and I reproached myself for a weakness I could have justified by many great examples.

‘Returning to myself again, and examining more closely the state of my soul, I said, “It is near ten years, Petrarch, since thou hast quitted Bologna: what a change in thy manners since that time! Not yet safe in port, I dare not view those tempests of the mind with which I feel myself continually agitated. The



time will perhaps come, when I may be able to say with St. Augustine, 'If I retrace my past errors, those unhappy passions that overwhelmed me, it is now because they are still dear, it is because I will devote myself to none but thee, my God.' But I have yet much to do. I love, but it is a melancholy love. My state is desperate. It is that which Ovid paints so strongly in that well-known line,

"I cannot hate, and I am forc'd to love!"

"If," said I, "thou shouldst live ten years longer, and in that time make as much progress in virtue, wouldst thou not be able to die with a more assured hope?" Abandoned to these reflections, I deplored the imperfection of my conduct, and the instability of all things human.

'The sun was now going to rest, and I perceived that it would soon be time for me to descend the mountain. I then turned towards the west, when I fought in vain that long chain of mountains which separates France and Spain.

'Nothing, that I knew of, hid them from my sight; but nature has not given us organs capable of such extensive views. To the right I discovered the mountains of the Lyonnaise, and

to the left the surges of the Mediterranean, which bathe Marseilles on one side, and on the other dash themselves in pieces against the rocky shore. I saw them very distinctly, though at the distance of several days journey.

‘The Rhone glided under my eyes; the clouds were at my feet. Never was there a more extensive, variegated and enchanting prospect! What I saw rendered me less incredulous of the accounts of Olympus and Mount Athos, which they assert to be higher than the region of the clouds from whence descend the showers of rain.

‘After having satisfied my eyes for some time with those delightful objects, which elevated my mind, and inspired it with pious reflections, I took the book of St. Augustin’s Confessions, which I had from you, and which I always carry about me. It is dear to me for its own value; and the hands from whence I received it render it dearer still. On opening it, I accidentally fell on this passage in the tenth book: “Men go far to observe the summits of mountains, the waters of the sea, the beginnings and the courses of rivers, the immensity of the ocean; *but they neglect themselves.*”

‘I take God and my brother to witness that what I say is true. I was struck with the sin-



gularity of an accident, the application of which it was so easy for me to make.

‘ After having shut the book, I recollected what happened to St. Augustin and St. Anthony on the like occasion, and believing I could not do better than imitate these great saints, I left off reading, and gave myself up to the crowd of ideas which presented themselves, on the folly of mortals, who, neglecting their most noble part, confuse themselves with vain objects, and go to seek that with difficulty abroad which they might easily meet with at home. “ If,” said I, “ I have undergone so much labour and fatigue, that my body may be nearer heaven; what ought I not to do, and to suffer, that my soul may come there also?”

‘ In the midst of these contemplations I had got, without perceiving it, to the bottom of the hill, with the same safety, and less fatigue, than I went up. A fine clear moon favored our return. While they were preparing our supper, I shut myself up in a corner of the house, to give you this account, and the reflections it produced in my mind. You see, my father, that I hide nothing from you. I wish I was always able to tell you not only what I do, but even what I think. Pray to God that my thoughts, now, alas! vain, and wandering,

may be immoveably fixed on the only true and solid good.'

Petrarch often retired into the most desert places; and if by accident he met with Laura in the streets of Avignon, he avoided her, and passed swiftly to the other side. This affectation displeased her. Meeting him one day, she looked at him with more kindness than usual. Perhaps she wished to preserve a lover of such reputation; or could not be insensible to the constancy of his affection. A favor so unhop'd for from Laura, restored Petrarch to happiness, and put an end to all his boasted resolution. When he passed a few days without seeing her, he felt an irresistible desire to see her in those places she frequented. She behaved to him with more ease: he wished to assure her of his love by the most tender expressions, or at least by his sighs and tears; but the dignity of Laura's countenance and behaviour rendered him motionless: his senses were suspended, his tears dried up, and his words expired upon his lips. His eyes could alone express the feelings of his soul. In a sonnet he says,

'You could not, without compassion, behold the image of death stamped on my face. A kind regard, a word dictated by friendship, has



restored me to life. That I yet breathe is your precious gift. Dispose of me, for you are the reviver of my soul : you alone, beautiful Laura, possess both the keys to my heart.'

The poets imagined their heart to have two doors; the one leading to pleasure, the other to pain. It is to this poetic fiction that Petrarch alludes.

Laura wished to be beloved by Petrarch, but with such refinement that he should never speak of his love. Whenever he attempted the most distant expression of this kind, she treated him with excessive rigor; but when she saw him in despair, his countenance languishing, and his spirits drooping, she then re-animates him by some trifling kindness: a look, a gesture, or a word, was sufficient.

This mixture of severity and compassion, so strongly marked in the lines of Petrarch, is the key to a right judgment of Laura's character. It was thus she held for twenty years the affections of a man the most ardent and impetuous, without the smallest stain to her honor; this was the method she thought best adapted to the temper and disposition of Petrarch.

Whenever Laura had reason to complain of him, it was easy to perceive her displeasure: her hair was disturbed, she cast down her eyes, turned

away her head, and made haste out of his sight.

One day, more courageous than usual, Petrarch ventured to speak of his love and constancy, notwithstanding the rigor with which she treated him, and reproved her for the manner in which she behaved to the most faithful and discreet of lovers.

‘As soon as I appear, you turn away your eyes; you recline your head; and your countenance is troubled. *Alas ! I perceive you suffer.* O, Laura ! why these cruel manners ? Could you tear yourself from a heart where you have taken such deep root, I should commend your severity. In a barren and uncultivated soil, the plant that languishes requires a kinder sun ; but you must for ever live in my heart. Since then it is your destiny, render your situation less disagreeable.’

There are two stages of Petrarch’s love : the one when Laura was in that age of innocence in which there is no suspicion ; when she treated him with politeness, and with kindness, because she saw nothing in his manner that opposed such treatment. On his part, he behaved with tenderness and esteem, and she enjoyed at ease the pleasures of his conversation. The confidence with which this inspired him, and



the delight he felt in her presence, encouraged him, though with a trembling voice, to express his love. Laura replied with an agitated countenance, 'I am not, Petrarch, I am not the person you suppose me.' Petrarch was thunder-struck, and could not open his mouth. Laura forbids him to appear before her; he writes to her to beseech her pardon: she is still more offended, and avoids all occasions of seeing him. Petrarch weeps and sighs incessantly; and Laura deprives him of her society for a long time; but, on his falling sick, permits him at last to see, and to speak to her. He again hazards something about his affection, and she treats him with more severity than ever. He becomes outrageous, and in despair calls death to his succour, and goes wandering about in the most frightful and solitary deserts; love follows him every where.

A philosophical curiosity leads Petrarch to travel to France and Germany; but scarcely has he set out, when he repents, and desires to return. He feels that he cannot live without Laura. In traversing the forest of Ardenne, he believes her to be in every object he sees, and in every echo he hears. When he is near Lyons, his transports are inexpressible at the sight of the Rhone, because that river washes the walls

of the city where Laura resides. When he arrives at Avignon, he finds her in the same disposition he left her, as austere and intractable on the subject of love; and he complains that he could discover nothing in her eyes but anger and disdain.

This was his first state. He had yet never felt remorse; on the contrary, the modesty of Laura, her virtue, the innocence of her life, the graces of her conversation, had given him so high an idea of her, that he thought he could do nothing so honorable as to cultivate his love.

‘What a felicity is it for thee,’ he would say to himself, ‘to have dared thus high to raise thy vows of love! She has kindled in thy heart a flame, that, in disengaging thee from licentious pleasures, fought by unthinking mortals, directs thee to that sovereign good which is the reward of virtue.’

But when Petrarch returned from his journey, he began to feel some remorse for ascribing so much to any created being, though perfect as Laura herself. He reflected that his heart was formed for his Creator, and could never be happy till fixed on God. The exhortations of father Dennis were probably the cause of this remorse.

In his letters he says,



‘How much time have you wasted on that Laura? How many useless steps have you taken in those woods?’

But the smallest incident was sufficient to unhinge his philosophy, and stagger every resolution he had formed to calm his mind. One day he observed a country girl washing the veil of Laura. A sudden trembling seized him; and, though the dog-star raged, he shivered as in the depth of winter. Every other object was concentrated in this passion. It was not possible for him to apply to study, or the conduct of his affairs. His soul was like a field of battle, where his heart and reason held continual engagements.

‘It was this,’ says he, ‘that overspread with the clouds of grief those delightful years of life which by nature seemed consecrated to joy and pleasure.’

After contemplating his past and present state:

‘Ten years,’ says he, ‘has grief preyed upon me: a slow poison consumes my body: hardly have I strength to drag along my weakened limbs. I must get out of this dreadful situation; I must recover my liberty.’

He determined, therefore, again to travel, and try the effects of absence. We have already

mentioned the desire he had to visit Rome, and perform his promise to the bishop of Lombes. He had likewise a strong temptation to go to Paris, having promised some friends he left there he would soon return. At the head of these friends were father Dennis, and Robert de Bordi, whom the pope had just made chancellor of the church of Paris, with the canonry of Notre Dame.

Robert de Bordi was descended from one of the richest and most considerable families in Florence. He came when very young to pursue his studies at Paris, according to the custom of the Florentines, who have great emulation. He made so rapid a progress, that the doctors of this celebrated university had a sort of veneration for his genius. In truth, he was a man of extraordinary merit, a great philosopher, and a sound divine. He appeared with distinction in the council of Vincennes, where the opinion of John XXII. concerning the vision of God was condemned. We are obliged to him for having preserved to us the discourses of St. Augustin, which would probably have been lost, if he had not taken the pains to collect them.

Before we speak of Petrarch's journey, which he at last determined should be to Italy, we must insert a circumstance of reproach to his



character. In the early part of his life he had a mistress who behaved to him with less rigor than Laura, and by whom he had a son called John, and a daughter a few years after: They will both appear in the course of these memoirs.

After having obtained with difficulty the permission of cardinal Colonna, and taken leave of his friends, Petrarch set out from Avignon in the beginning of December, 1336, to go to Marseilles, where he embarked in a ship which was just setting sail to Civita-Vecchia. He concealed his name, and gave himself out for a pilgrim going to worship at Rome. Who can express the joy he felt when from the deck he could discover the coast of Italy! that dear country, after which he had so long sighed! When he had landed, he perceived a laurel-tree. In his first emotion he ran towards it; and too much beside himself to observe his steps, he fell into a brook, which he must cross to arrive at the wished-for object. This fall caused him to swoon. Always occupied with Laura, he says,

‘ On those shores, washed by the Tyrrhene sea, I beheld that stately laurel which always warms my imagination. Love impelled me towards it. I flew, and through my impatience

fell breathless in the intervening stream. I was alone, and in the woods, yet I blushed at my heedlessness; for, to the reflecting mind, no witness is requisite to excite the emotions of shame.'

It was not easy for Petrarch to pass from the coast of Tuscany to Rome; for the war between the Ursins and the Colonnas, which was renewed with more fury than ever, filled all the surrounding places with armed men. As he had no escort, he went to the castle of Capranica, at ten leagues distance from Rome. He was well received by Orso, count of Anguillora, who had espoused Agnes Colonna, sister of the cardinal and of the bishop. He was a man of understanding, and fond of letters. The description of this castle and its environs is contained in the following letter of Petrarch's to cardinal Colonna:

'Capranica is the very situation I could wish for, consumed as I am by anxiety. It was formerly an uncultivated place, full of thickets and wild trees, where the goats came to browse, and from whence it took its name. The beauty of the situation, and the natural fertility of the soil, drew men by degrees to settle there. They built a fortress on the most elevated part, and as many houses as the compass of a nar-



row hill could admit. From the top of this hill they discover mount Soracte, celebrated in this line of Horace:

“ See how Soracte stands, white with deep snows!”

The lake Cimirus, of which Virgil speaks, and Sutri, a town of Ceres, are but two thousand paces distant. The air of Capranica is very clear. Around it are a great number of little hills, which are not difficult of access; several spacious caverns; and to the south a thick wood, which is a shelter from the burning heats of noon. The hill reclines on the north-side, and discovers fields in full bloom, where the bees delight to dwell. Several fountains of sweet water glide along the valleys; and in the woods, and on the hills, deer, stags, kids, and all sorts of tame cattle, are seen to wander and graze. Birds of all kinds are heard to sing; and in general all things are found here which belong to the finest and most cultivated countries, without reckoning the lakes, the rivers, and a neighbouring sea, which are among the richest presents of nature.

‘ Peace was the only thing which I could not meet with in this delightful situation. I know not whether fate, or some crime of the

nation, has drawn on them the scourge of war. The shepherd, instead of guarding against the wolves, goes armed into the woods to defend himself from the enemy. The labourer, in a coat of mail, uses a lance instead of a goad to drive along his cattle. The fowler draws his nets covered with his shield. The fisherman carries a sword, instead of a line to hook his fish. And, what is still more extraordinary, the native draws water from the wells in an old rusty helmet instead of a pail. In a word, arms here are used as tools and implements for all the labours of the field, and all the wants of men. In the night are heard dreadful howlings round the walls; in the day terrible voices, which cry out, without ceasing, "To arms! to arms!" What music, compared with those soft and harmonious sounds that I drew from my lute at Avignon! This country is the image of hell; it breathes nothing but hatred, war, and carnage.

' From this picture, who could believe that Capranica was the residence of the mildest and most amiable of men? Orso, count of Anguillora, tranquil in the midst of this confusion, lives with his wife in the happiest union, gives the most obliging reception to his guests, governs his vassals with a strictness tempered



tempered with love, cultivates the Muses, and seeks the society of men of learning. Agnes Colonna, his wife, is one of those women who can only be praised by a silent admiration, so much does she rise above all that can be said to her honor.

‘These charming hosts make that place delightful, which would else be terrible from the horrors of war. Though I greatly desire the sight of Rome, and the friends I know there, I feel not that inquietude men experience as they approach nearer the object of their desires. I am as tranquil in this house as I could be even in the temple of Peace herself. And, as we accustom ourselves insensibly to all things, I walk without arms, and without dread, on those hills which are the scenes of war. I hear them sound the charge; I see armed troops engage with one another: the clashing of swords, and the cries of the combatants, do not prevent my meditating as in my closet, and labouring to amuse posterity.’

When Petrarch was arrived at Capranica, he dispatched a courier to the bishop of Lombes, to inform him where he was, and that he knew no method of getting to him in the midst of so many dangers; all the roads which led to Rome being occupied by the enemy.

The bishop expressed great joy on hearing of his arrival, and ordered him to wait his coming.

This prelate came to Capranica with Stephen Colonna, his brother, senator of Rome. They had with them only a troop of a hundred horse; and as the enemy kept possession of the country with more than five hundred, it was wonderful they met with no difficulty on their route; but the name and reputation of the Colonnas had spread the alarm in the enemy's camp, and by this means made their way free and safe.

What a joy was it for the bishop of Lombes to see that friend again whom he so tenderly loved, whose works he read with pleasure, and whose conversation had a thousand charms! The senator was likewise delighted to see Petrarch, whose reputation had already spread far and wide. It is impossible to express Petrarch's joy on beholding the prelate who was so dear to him, and the hero for the sight of whom he had so impatiently longed. They departed all together from Capranica with their little escort, and arrived at Rome without any skirmish, notwithstanding the measures taken by their enemies to intercept them.

1337. Stephen Colonna, in quality of se-



nator, resided in the capital, where he lodged Petrarch, who could not contain his transports, to find himself in a place which had been the theatre of those great events always present in his mind.

It is much to be regretted that the letters which Petrarch wrote from Rome to Cardinal Colonna are lost. There remains only a fragment of one, dated from the Capitol, as follows:

‘ After having read the long account I gave you of Capranica, what will you not expect of me concerning Rome? The subject is inexhaustible. I am struck with the wonders I every where behold. Their variety confounds me, and I know not where to begin. I recall to mind what you said to me one day at Avignon: “ Petrarch, do not go to Rome: that city will not answer the idea you have conceived of it; you will find nothing but ruins.” These words impressed my mind, and cooled my ardour. I had experienced that great objects are often diminished by their presence: but here I found it otherwise. My ideas of Rome are enlarged, not diminished; its ruins have something grand and majestic, which impress me with veneration. And, far from being surprised that Rome should have subdued the

world, I rather wonder that the conquest was not earlier accomplished.'

Petrarch was received and treated in the house of the Colonnas as one of the family; and they contended which should shew him the most friendship. Old Colonna, who knew him at Avignon, loaded him with favors, and with eagerness pointed out to him all the curiosities in Rome. But of all the family, Jean de St. Vit, the brother of Stephen Colonna, was the most happy in Petrarch. This old man, who had been exiled from Avignon by his enemies, found more charms than ever in his wit and conversation, and was useful to him in his researches after Roman antiquities, about which our poet was very inquisitive. Jean de St. Vit had made them his study from his childhood, and was perhaps the only Roman of that time well acquainted with them, if we except Nicholas Rienzi, of whom I shall soon speak.

Nothing appeared more astonishing to Petrarch than the indifference of the Romans to these precious remains of antiquity. They had them continually before their eyes, but vouchsafed them not the least observation. 'The magnificence of Rome,' says he, 'and all that



can heighten its glory, are no where less known than at Rome.'

Jean de St. Vit took him every day to walk within and around this great city. It had a waste and desolate appearance, though it contained a vast number of inhabitants. They took scarcely a step without finding something to excite their admiration, and furnish them with a subject of discourse. At the end of their walk, they generally sat down to rest themselves on the baths of Dioclesian, some vestiges of which are still remaining. Sometimes they went upon the roof of this fine monument, where there was a clear air, a very extensive view, and no one to interrupt them.

Rome was at this time in a deplorable situation. The Colonnas at war with the Ursins, could not re-establish the peace of this city, or restore its ancient lustre. It was continually a prey to the evils of war. Nothing was to be seen in the streets but ruins; the churches falling to pieces; the altars spoiled of their ornaments. The priests were interrupted in the performance of their offices. Strangers could not resort thither; for the highways were infested with robbers, to whom the city, and even the churches, served for a retreat. No-

thing was heard of but rapes, murders, adulteries, and assassinations. Audaciousness reigned; justice was dumb; indulgence rendered the guilty more presumptuous; and the nobles, divided among themselves, only agreed in oppressing the people. If Petrarch was touched to observe the wretched state of Rome, and the decay of its ancient monuments, he was repaid by viewing the amiable and distinguished behaviour of the Roman ladies.

‘It is with reason,’ says he, ‘that they are renowned above their sex; for they have the tenderness and modesty of women, with the courage and constancy of men.’ In the two sisters of cardinal Colonna, he assures us, were united the virtues and good qualities of the Greek and Roman heroines. As to the men, ‘They are,’ says he, ‘a good sort of people, and affable when treated with civility; but they can bear no raillery in one particular; I mean that which respects the honor of their wives. Far from being as tractable as the Avignons, who suffer their wives to be taken from them without the least murmur, the Romans have always this sentence in their mouths: “Smite us where you will, so we may but preserve the honor of our wives.”

‘The Romans,’ adds Petrarch, ‘are not



greedy of gain. I was astonished, in so great a city, to find so few merchants and usurers.' A very different representation of them from one given in the twelfth century. 'Beware of the Romans,' says St. Bernard; 'they are seditious, jealous of their neighbours, and cruel towards strangers. They love nobody, and nobody loves them.' Their manners must have undergone a great change in the space of two centuries, or Petrarch must have been strangely partial to them. Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, speaking of them in the same century, says, 'Rome would be happy if it had no lords, or if its nobles were honest men.'

Notwithstanding all the endeavours of the bishop of Lombes, he could not terminate the quarrel between the Ursins and his family. This was the principal object of his long residence at Rome. He was displeased that his father had engaged in a war which might have such fatal consequences; and he took the liberty one day to speak with freedom, and some severity, on this subject. Old Stephen, who, notwithstanding his great age, had yet much fire remaining, was hurt by these representations. He could not forgive the bishop, and would not admit him into his presence. Petrarch used the strongest solicitations to en-

gage him to renew his usual kindness to his son, and at last was so happy as to succeed.

In a conversation with the venerable old man, soon after this union, there happened a singular prediction, which Petrarch refers to afterwards in a letter to Stephen Colonna.

‘Call to mind,’ says he, ‘that, walking together one evening in the street which leads from your palace to the Capitol, we stopped; and leaning on an old marble monument fronting the street that goes from the hills to the Tiber, we conversed on the state of your family. I had just obtained a favor from you, which you had refused to all your relations; it was to pardon the freedom of a son against whom you had conceived a violent displeasure.

“My son is your friend,” said you; “but he has not respected my age. You would have me pardon and restore him to my love: I can refuse you nothing: I will pass it entirely over; but I take this occasion to justify myself. They pretend that, contrary to what befits my age, I have engaged in a war which will descend to my family after my death; an inheritance of hatreds, quarrels, and dangers, with which it will be always agitated. I take God to witness, that it was only with a view to peace I entered into war. The weakness of



age, a certain degree of insensibility, which is spread over my soul and all my senses, and, above all, long experience, have given me a love of repose, and make me sigh for tranquillity. But I refuse no difficulties when they are necessary; and would rather confront death in battle, than drag out a shameful old age in slavery. As to what regards my inheritance, alas!" said you, looking earnestly at me, your eyes bathed in tears, "I would, and I ought, to leave one to my children; but the fates have ordered it otherwise, by the overthrow of order, and the reign of confusion. It is myself—it is the decrepid old man before you, who will be the heir of all his children." At these words grief bound up your heart, and you could proceed no further.

'I am not ignorant,' says Petrarch, 'that God permits princes sometimes to foresee what will happen to their children: witness the emperor Vespasian, and many others. Nevertheless, I gave little attention at that time to this prediction; but when it was verified, I recollected and mentioned it to my friends.'

It is not certain how long Petrarch continued at Rome, probably his stay was but short. It appears from a Latin epistle of his to the bishop of Lombes, that his route was to-

wards the west, and that he passed the Pyrennean mountains. I doubt not he went to take possession of his canonry at Lombes, which the pope had given him, with the expectation of the first vacant prebend. He says, in the same epistle, that he travelled along the coast of Spain by Cadiz, and from thence to the shores of the British sea. The true motive of these journies was probably the disgust and weariness of life which he felt in the city of Avignon, and that love of liberty which would have carried him to the extremities of the earth.

‘One of the most disagreeable things,’ says he, ‘in the course of my journey, was, that, when I went from my own habitation, I met with none who spoke Latin; and when I came home again, I had not my books, my constant companions, so that I was obliged to have recourse to my memory for amusement.’

All the journies of Petrarch only served to increase the idea he had always formed of the superiority of Italy over France, England, Germany, and all the rest of the world. In another letter to a friend, he explains himself more particularly.

‘Formerly,’ says Petrarch, ‘France possessed neither the gifts of Bacchus, nor those of Mi-



nerva. It is to Rome they owe the wine and the oil they gather: but the olive-tree is still scarce in this kingdom; and they do not cultivate those golden fruits which scatter so delightful a perfume. Their sheep yield not so fine a wool. The stubborn soil opens not its bosom to give out the treasures it contains. It sends not forth its salutary waters which, running from the minerals, Nature has placed as the remedy for the greatest part of our diseases.

‘ In England they drink nothing but beer and cyder. The beverage of Flanders is metheglin. As wine cannot be transported but at a great price, few people can afford to drink it.

‘ I shall not speak of those frozen climates which are watered by the Danube, the Bog, and the Tanais. They know neither Bacchus nor Minerva, and are little favored by Ceres. Nature seems to have acted the part of a step-mother to all these countries: She has refused something to every one of them. To some she has given no forests: they can only warm themselves with turf. Others are full of marshes, which, exhaling corrupted vapours, the inhabitants have no water fit to drink. Some there are where the land, covered with

a barren sand, with heath and bushes, produce nothing useful: and others which tigers, leopards, lions, and serpents, render almost uninhabitable. Italy is the only country that Nature has treated like a mother. She has given to it universal empire, talents, arts, all the advantages of genius; and, above all, that lyre which caused the Latins to triumph over the Greeks. In a word, it wants nothing but a lasting peace.'

Petrarch assures us, that exercise and absence had produced a happy effect upon his mind, that his soul became tranquil, and he was no longer agitated with those inward conflicts which destroyed his health and his peace. 'The idea of Laura,' says he, 'less frequently presents itself; and when it does, it has less power.' Instead of passing whole nights in tears, he slept quietly; he was gay; every thing amused him. He thought he was cured, and smiled at the follies of love.

Petrarch returned to Avignon in August 1337. No sooner did he arrive than he saw Laura; no sooner had he seen her, than his wound, so newly closed, burst open again, and his passion seized him with more violence than ever.



‘ I desired death,’ says he. ‘ I was even tempted to seek it in the violence of my anguish. As a pilot at sea dreads the rock on which he has been cast, so did I dread the meeting with Laura. She was sick; but the near approach of death had not diminished the lustre of her eyes. I trembled at her shadow. The sound of her voice deprived me of motion.’

In this dreadful state, Petrarch saw he had no other resource but flight. He determined to leave the city of Avignon, which in other respects also was insupportable to him. He assures us, the manners of its inhabitants, and the corruption of the court of Rome, were the true motives of his departure. Perhaps, also, a secret chagrin that he was not advanced to a superior post, while many worthless persons were raised to the highest dignities.

‘ To obtain such advantages,’ says Petrarch, ‘ it is necessary to frequent the palaces of the great, to flatter, promise, lie, dissemble, and deceive; qualities to which I was a stranger. I have no aversion to honors, but to the methods of gaining them.’

He speaks in the same manner of riches. It is probable also that the desire of fame, in the

purfuit of letters, as well as his fufferings from love, induced him to leave Avignon.

Having determined this matter, he could think of no fituation fo favorable to thefe views as Vaclufe; that delightful folitude which he went to fee when a fchoolboy at Carpentras, and which made at that age fo lively an impreffion upon his mind. Petrarch tells us, he fometimes went there to moderate the ardor of his mind by a view of the cool waters of that marvellous fountain, and the delightful fhades of the woods with which it was furronded. Refolving to fix his refidence there, he bought a little cottage, with a fmall field adjoining, and went with no other companions than his books

Vaclufe is one of thofe places in which nature delights to appear under a form the moft fingular and romantic. Towards the coaft of the Mediterranean, and on a plain beautiful as the vale of Tempe, you difcover a little valley, enclosed by a barrier of rocks, in the form of a horfe-fhoe. The rocks are high, bold, and grotesque; and the valley is divided by a river, along the banks of which are extended meadows and pastures of a perpetual verdure. A path, which is on the left fide of the river, leads in gentle windings to the head of this vaft am-



phitheatre. There, at the foot of an enormous rock, and directly in front, you behold a prodigious cavern, hollowed by the hand of nature; and in this cavern arises a spring as celebrated almost as that of Helicon.

When the waters of the fountain are low, you may enter the cavern, the gloom of which is tremendous. It is a double cavern. The opening into the exterior is an arch sixty feet high; that of the interior, thirty. Near the middle of the cavern you see an oval basin, the longest diameter of which is one hundred and eight feet; and into this basin, without jet or bubble, rises that copious stream which forms the river Sorgia. There is a common report that this fountain has never been fathomed. May not this proceed from the water's issuing with great impetuosity at the bottom, and thus forcing back the lead and line? However this may be, you see nothing but an expanse of waters, smooth and tranquil.

The surface of the fountain is black. This appearance is produced by the depth of the spring, the colour of the rocks, and the obscurity of the cavern; for, in reality, nothing can be more perfectly clear and limpid than the water of this spring. It stains not the rocks

over which it passes, nor does it produce either weeds or mud. But, what is very extraordinary, though so beautiful to the eye, it is harsh to the taste, crude, heavy, and difficult to digest. It is excellent, however, for tanning and dying; and is said to promote the growth of a plant which fattens oxen, and hatches chickens. Strabo, and Pliny the naturalist, speaks of this peculiarity.

In the ordinary state of the fountain, the water falls away through some cavities under the rocks, and afterwards returns to the day, and commences its course as a river. But during the swell about the spring equinox, and sometimes also after heavy rains, there is an astonishing accumulation. The waters roll on with a lofty head to the opening of the cavern, and are precipitated and dashed along the rocks with the noise of thunder. The tumult, however, soon ceases; the waters are peaceably received into a deep and commodious channel, and form a most delightful river, navigable to its very source. This river is, in its progress, divided into various branches, waters many parts of Provence, receives several other streams, reunites its branches, and falls into the Rhone near Avignon.



Petrarch thus beautifully moralises on this uncommon subject:

‘ Seneca observes, that *the sources of great rivers inspire us with a kind of veneration*: And that, *where a river bursts out at once, altars should be erected*. And I call Heaven to witness,’ adds he, ‘ it is my firm resolution to dedicate one to the fountain of Vacluse, as soon as my scattered faculties are a little collected. This altar shall be raised in the garden which hangs over the fountain. It shall not, however, be dedicated, like those of Seneca, to the gods of the rivers, or the nymphs of the fountains, but to the Virgin Mother of that God who has destroyed the altars, and demolished the temples, of all other gods.’

Such was the language of Petrarch ten years after his first retirement to Vacluse. But it was not the language of a heart as yet freed from the charms of love. The history of his mind during this solitude is best collected from his own works.

In one of his letters, written about this time, he says,

‘ Here I make war upon my senses, and treat them as my enemies. My eyes, which have drawn me into a thousand difficulties, see no

longer either gold or precious stones, or ivory or purple; they behold nothing, save the firmament, the water, and the rocks. The only female who comes within their sight, is a swarthy old woman, dry and parched as the Lybian deserts. My ears are no longer courted by those harmonies of instruments or voices which have often transported my soul; they hear nothing but the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the warbling of birds, and the murmurs of the stream.

‘ I keep silence from morn to night. There is no one to converse with; for people constantly employed, either in spreading their nets, or taking care of their vines and orchards, have no knowledge of the intercourses of the world, or the conversations of society. I often content myself with the brown bread of my old fisherman, and even eat it with pleasure; and when I am served with white, I almost always return it.

‘ This old fisherman, who is as hard as iron, earnestly remonstrates against my manner of life; says it is too hardy, and assures me I cannot long hold out. I am, on the contrary, convinced, that it is more easy to accustom one’s self to a plain diet, than to the luxuries of a feast. Figs, raisins, nuts, and almonds, these



are my delicacies. I am fond of the fish with which this river abounds: it is an entertainment to see them caught, and I sometimes employ myself in spreading the nets. As to my dress, here is an entire change; you would take me for a labourer or a shepherd.

‘ My mansion resembles that of Cato, or Fabricius: my whole household consists of a dog and my old fisherman. His cottage is contiguous to mine. When I want him, I call; when I no longer stand in need of him, he returns to his cottage. I have made myself two gardens, which please me marvellously: I do not think they are to be equalled in all the world. And must I confess to you a more than female weakness with which I am haunted? I am positively angry that there is any thing so beautiful out of Italy. They are my Transalpine Parnassus.

One of these gardens is shady, formed for contemplation, and sacred to Apollo. It hangs over the source of the river, and is terminated by rocks, or places accessible only to birds.

The other is nearer my cottage, of an aspect less severe, and devoted to Bacchus; and, what is extremely singular, it is in the middle of a rapid river. The approach to it is over a ridge of rocks which communicates with the garden;

and there is a natural grotto under the rock, which gives it the appearance of a rustic bridge. Into this grotto the rays of the sun never penetrate. I am confident it much resembles the place where Cicero sometimes went to declaim. It invites to study.

‘Hither I retreat during the noon-tide hours. My mornings are engaged upon the hills, and my evenings either in the meadows, or in the garden sacred to Apollo. It is small, but most happily suited to rouse the most sluggish spirit, and elevate it to the skies. Here would I most willingly pass my days, was I not too near Avignon, and too far from Italy. For why should I conceal this weakness of my soul? I love Italy, and I hate Avignon. The pestilential influence of this horrid place empoisons the the pure air of Vaucluse, and will compel me to quit my retirement.’

To another friend he writes this eloquent invitation :

‘Here is no tyrant to intimidate, no proud citizen to insult, no wicked tongue to calumniate. Neither quarrels, clamours, law-suits, nor the din of war. We are strangers to avarice, ambition, and envy; and have no great lords, to whom court must be paid. Every thing breathes joy, freedom, and simplicity.



Our lot is neither that of poverty nor riches; but a sweet, modest, and sober rusticity. The inhabitants are innocent, tractable, and unacquainted with arms. Our chief, good, affable, and a lover of honest folks. The air healthy, the winds soft, the country open, the springs pure, and the river full of fish. We have shady woods, cool grottos, green lawns, enamelled pastures, and hills sacred to Bacchus and Minerva.

‘As to what respects the mere body, no one takes less trouble about it than myself. But I can tell you, in one word, that every thing that liveth upon the earth, or that moveth in the waters, is here as in the terrestrial Paradise, to speak in the language of the divines; or as in the fields of Elysium, to speak in that of the poets. A voluptuary, who was in search of the greatest dainties, would be easily accommodated in this neighbourhood.’

In another letter to a friend we have a picture in a very different style:

‘Oft in the midst of summer, when I had ended my midnight prayers, and the moon shone bright, have I been irresistibly impelled to wander over the fields, or ascend the hills. Oft, at this silent hour, have I walked alone into the cavern, where no one even in the day,

and in company, can enter without emotion. I feel a kind of pleasure in doing this: but it is a pleasure mixed with horror.'

Petrarch retired to this delightful spot to cure himself of his passion, and indulge his taste for letters; but in vain.

'I may hide myself,' says he, 'among the rocks, and in the woods; but there are no places so wild or solitary whither the torments of love do not pursue me.

'Thrice, in that dark and lonely hour when nought but ghastly shades are seen or heard, Laura with stedfast look approached my bed, and claimed her slave. My limbs were froze with fear: my blood fled from my veins, and rushed upon my heart. Trembling I rose ere morn, and left a house where all I saw alarmed me. I climbed the rocks, I ran into the woods, watching with fearful eyes this dreadful vision. I may not be believed, but still it followed. Here I perceived it starting from a tree—there rising from a fountain.—Now it descended from the rocks, or floated on the clouds. Surrounded thus, I stood transfixed with horror!'

1338. Petrarch passed near a year in this retreat. The domestics who served him at



Avignon desired their dismissal, for they could not bear to lead such reclusive lives.

He gives this character of his fisherman, who was his domestic at Vacluse.

‘He was,’ says he, ‘an aquatic animal, brought up among the fountains and rivers, and seeking his livelihood in the rocks; but a very good man; merry, docile, and obedient. To say simply that he was faithful, would be too little; for he was fidelity itself. He understood agriculture, and every thing relative to a country life. It was a maxim with him, that whatever was sown the eighth of the ides of February, in the soil of Vacluse, could not fail of being fruitful.’

He had a wife, of whom Petrarch has given this description in a letter to one of his friends:

‘Her face is so withered, so scorched by the sun, that was you to see her, you would think you beheld the deserts of Lybia, or Ethiopia. If Helen, Lucretia, or Virginia, had possessed faces like hers, Troy would have existed still; Tarquin would not have been driven from his kingdom; nor Appius have died in prison. But though the face of my farmer’s wife is black, nothing can be whiter than her soul. She does not feel the want of beauty;

and to look on her, one would even say, it became her to be ugly. No creature was ever so faithful, humble, and laborious.

‘At the season when the grasshoppers can scarcely support the heat of the sun, she passes her life in the fields; her hardy skin defies even the fury of the dog-days. At night, when she returns, she works in her house like a young person just risen from sleep. Never any complaints, never the least murmur; nothing that shews the smallest variation of temper, escapes her. She lies on a bed of leaves. All her food is a black gritty bread; her drink a sharp wine, which tastes like vinegar, and with which she mixes a great deal of water. If any one presents her with more delicate food, she rejects it, because it is not what she has been accustomed to.’

Petrarch had hired this house from a peasant: it was an uncomfortable dwelling, but he rebuilt it in the most simple manner. His best friends came seldom to see him; and, when they did, made but a short stay. Others went only from the mere principle of charity, and as we should go to see sick people or prisoners. Gui Settimo himself, that companion, that faithful friend, who had never left him from his childhood, had not the courage to



follow him into this solitude. He was in the bustle of the world, and, soliciting a place at court, was called to the bar. But when he could steal a few moments from the hurry of business, he went to pass them in this retreat with his friend, and said with him, 'This is a port where I came to shelter myself from the tempests of the world.'

The other friends of Petrarch wrote to him sometimes, to excuse themselves for not seeing him more frequently.

'It is not possible to live as you do,' said they to him. 'The life you lead is contrary to nature. In the winter you sit like an owl in the corner of your chimney. In the summer you roam about the fields without ceasing; or, if by chance you are found, it is reposing yourself under the shade of a tree.'

'These friends of mine,' says Petrarch, 'regard the pleasures of the world as the supreme good; they do not comprehend that it is possible to renounce these pleasures. They are ignorant of my resources. I have friends whose society is delightful to me; they are persons of all countries, and of all ages; distinguished in war, in council, and in letters. Easy to live with, always at my command. They come at my call, and return when I de-

fire them: they are never out of humour, and they answer all my questions with readiness. Some present in review before me the events of past ages; others reveal to me the secrets of nature: these teach me how to live, and those how to die: these dispel my melancholy by their mirth, and amuse me by their fallies of wit: and some there are who prepare my soul to suffer every thing, to desire nothing, and to become thoroughly acquainted with itself. In a word, they open a door to all the arts and sciences. As a reward for such great services, they require only a corner of my little house, where they may be safely sheltered from the depredations of their enemies. In fine, I carry them with me into the fields, the silence of which suits them better than the business and tumults of cities.'

The village of Vacluse is in the diocese of Cavaillon, and is subject to it in spirituals and temporals; the bishop is sovereign. Cavaillon is a little neat town, delightfully situated at the foot of a mountain near Durance, four leagues from Avignon, and two from the fountain of Vacluse. Petrarch gives this account of it:

'This town is neither large, well peopled, nor well built. It has only name and an-



tiquity; it is spoken of as an ancient city, in some authentic memoirs about fifty years before Christ, at the time that Julius Cæsar conquered Britain. It was formerly built on the mountain, and was a Roman colony, as appears from the medals of Lepidus. My friend Socrates said pleasantly enough, that it was like the little town which, according to some writers, king Agbarus offered to Jesus Christ. The bishopric resembles its possessor; it is equal to the greatest in dignity, and enjoys the freedom of the least.

‘Philip of Cabaffole has possessed it three years. He was of an ancient and noble family, divided into two branches; one of them resided at Avignon, the other at Cavaillon: he was of the second branch, and not arrived at the age prescribed by the canons when he was made bishop. One of his brothers, called John Elzeor, was at that time sent from the king of Naples to the court of the pope. This family have always been attached to the house of Anjou, which has loaded them with benefits. Philip received his education at Cavaillon, the place of his birth; he was made canon before he was twelve years old, thirteen years after archdeacon, and provost the year following. Three years after he had the bishopric

vacant by the death of Godfridi, who had been apothecary, physician, and favorite, of John XXII.

All contemporary authors speak of Philip of Cabaffole as a man of distinguished merit: In the government of his diocese he was just and impartial; the popes employed him in several nice and important offices, in which he conducted himself with wisdom and dexterity. His mind was well cultivated, and enriched with a variety of knowledge; he gave all those moments to study which were not employed in public affairs. In the library of St. Victor, at Paris, there are some works of his in manuscript, which have never been printed. Petrarch gives his eulogium in two words: 'He was,' says he, 'a great man, with a little bishopric.' His merit afterwards raised him to the highest dignities in the church.

Petrarch knew this prelate only by sight when he took the resolution to fix at Vaucluse: as soon as he got there, he went to pay his duty to him as his bishop and his lord. Philip of Cabaffole loved men of wit and letters: he was acquainted with Petrarch's high reputation, gave him the most obliging reception, and expressed great joy to see him fixed in his diocese.



‘ He received me,’ said Petrarch, ‘ as of old St. Ambrose received St. Augustin, as a father and a bishop. He afterwards vouchsafed to admit me to the strictest intimacy, and came sometimes to Vacluse with no other view than to see me.’

The bishop of Cavaillon had a castle at Vacluse, placed on the top of a rock, of which there remain now only the ruins. Its approach appears inaccessible, and it is difficult to comprehend how it could ever be inhabited: we shall see, however, that Philip de Cabassole went there frequently. The people of that country shew these ruins as the remains of the house of Petrarch; but they are mistaken, for it was much lower, and nearer the river and the village. It was not long after this prelate became acquainted with Petrarch, that he had the misfortune to lose one of his brothers, called Isnord: he was a knight of St. John of Jerusalem, and died in the flower of his age during a voyage on the Red Sea. As soon as our poet heard this melancholy news, he went to Cavaillon to condole with the bishop on his loss. He found him extremely affected, but calm, as became a man of his dignity.

When Petrarch returned to Vacluse, he wrote the bishop a letter, in which he places

before him every motive which could soften his grief; and at the same time mentions with admiration the becoming manner in which he received the compliments made him on this occasion.

In the answer this prelate returned to Petrarch, he appeared most touched with the manner of his brother's death, and bitterly laments that, as he lost his life on the sea, his body had not received the honors of burial.

Petrarch took up the pen again, and taxed Philip with a weakness more natural to a woman than a bishop. He proves that the place of interment can never have any influence on our happiness in the other world; and he takes this occasion to speak of ancient customs with respect to the burial of the dead. He asserts, that the custom of reducing the body to ashes was not an ancient one among the Romans: that Lucius Sylla, the dictator, was the first of the Cornelian family who ordered his body to be burnt after his death, from the fear they should treat him as he had treated Marius. His example was followed, though without the same reason, by those who came after him. Petrarch shews, in this letter, that there are errors which proceed from habit; that certain things, which give us horror, are nothing to



people accustomed to them; and that a man of understanding should shake off vulgar prejudices, and seek the truth in the nature of things themselves.

Petrarch had the happiness to find another friend in the provost of Cavaillon. Pons Samson obtained that dignity by the promotion of Philip de Cabaffole to the episcopacy. Petrarch knew him from his childhood, and they had studied together.

‘He is justly called Samson,’ says Petrarch; ‘for he has as much strength of mind as that scourge of the Philistines had of body.’ The provost of Cavaillon joined to this a great knowledge of letters, and a sweetness of manners, which rendered his society delightful. The bishop loved him extremely.

Petrarch, who had not seen him for some time, was charmed to find him so near, and to renew his former friendship.

We learn that Petrarch often received visits in this solitude, which he had no reason to expect or hope for, from persons of rank and genius, who came from Italy, and the remotest parts of France, with no other view than to see and converse with him, ‘Some there were,’ says he, ‘who sent before them magnificent presents, persuaded that liberality clears the way,

and opens the doors.' They assured him they came only to see him; and, if they did not find him at Avignon, they set out immediately for Vacluse. He names only Peter de Poitiers, a man respectable for his piety and his knowledge. He entered very young into the order of the Cordeliers; and was afterwards promoted by the popes John and Clement to the priory of Clifton, and the abbey of St. Javin de Poitiers. His genius, or rather the taste of the age he lived in, led him to view every subject in a moral light, which made his works deficient in variety.

All Europe was at this time in motion, expecting France to be invaded by the English. Edward III. at this time king of England, was a young prince full of fire, valor, and ambition, and possessed all the qualities that form a hero and a conqueror. He disputed the crown with Philip of Valois, under pretext that, being nephew of the deceased king, by Isabella, his mother, he was a degree nearer than Philip, who was only his cousin-german. Philip opposed the Salic law, which excluded females from the succession. The English lawyers of this time, who acknowledged this law in France, maintained they had excluded females, because of their weak capacities, from



wearing, though they might transmit, the crown. But in the assembly of the nobles it was universally decided, that women could not give a right of which they were not in possession.

This decision appeared unjust to Edward, and confirmed his enmity to France. It began by little animosities. Edward received Robert of Artois with open arms, who had been banished from France for a falsehood he was guilty of in a process at law; and Philip returned the compliment by receiving David de Bruce, king of Scotland, dethroned by Edward Baliol, whom the king of England supported.

The emperor Lewis of Bavaria took the side of the English, and declared war against France. He summoned Humbert, the dauphin of Vienna, who held his titles from the emperor, to aid him in this war. Philip, on his part, invited Humbert, as a vassal of the crown to which his father had rendered homage, to come and join him at Amiens. Humbert, who was by no means of a warlike disposition, found himself very critically situated; and he thought he might come off by standing neuter. Petrarch knew the dauphin well; he had seen him often at cardinal Colonna's, when this

prince was at Avignon. He had expressed a friendship for Petrarch, who was concerned to see him act a part contrary to his honour; and he undertook to write to him, to draw him out of this lethargy, and to shew him the fatal consequences which must ensue from it. It is probable that cardinal Colonna, who loved Humbert, and was interested in his glory, engaged Petrarch to write this letter, as follows:

‘ My attachment to you forces me to break silence, and to write you a letter which, if it is read with the same disposition in which it was written, may contribute to your glory, and ought to increase your kindness towards me. If the name of friend, with which you have honored me, is not an empty title, I think it is my duty to rouse you from sleep, and to set before you the great perils with which you are threatened.

‘ You perceive what a war is kindling between the kings of France and England; your ancestors have beheld nothing like it. All the princes and the nations of Europe are set in motion. Never has a wider field of glory been opened for the bravery of warriors. Already have those people taken up arms who inhabit the country between the Alps and the



ocean. You alone live in peace in the midst of that whirlwind which encircles all.

‘ Listen to Virgil, who asks, Can you sleep in the situation you are in? Do you not see the dangers that threaten you? Shame alone should have drawn you out of your lethargy. While all the warriors in Europe are armed, and exposed to the heat of the dog-days, can you remain buried in the bosom of luxury and ease? You are young, noble, robust, and powerful. You appeared formerly, eager after glory; what restrains this desire at present? You love sloth; you fly from labour: but learn from Sallust, that luxury and idleness suit none but women, and that labour is the lot of men. You fear death: but what is death?—A sort of sleep. What difference is there between the day in which we begin, and that in which we end, our lives? The first introduces us to pain and trouble; the last delivers us from both. Hence the custom drawn from the maxims of sound philosophy, to weep at the birth, and rejoice at the death, of their friends.

‘ But even supposing death to be an evil, do you believe you can shelter yourself from it by a soft and effeminate life? Are you ignorant of that proverb which says, “ The palate kills more than the sword?” Death seeks us and

finds us every where. Would you then be so much attached to life, as to wish to prolong it at the expence of your honor? Many, had they died sooner, would have preserved the names they afterwards lost; witness Tarquin, Claudius, and Pompey. Shall the fear of death then prevent you going where your duty calls? Or can you think yourself in safety at home?

‘Open your eyes, and you will see an enormous mass, moved by the efforts of a thousand nations, ready to fall wherever fortune shall decree. Your enemies surround the king; you know he is not prejudiced in your favor. If he should prove conqueror, do you think he will take your indolence in good part? If he is vanquished, do you hope to rest secure from those dangers victory draws after it? Do not you fear being overwhelmed in the common ruin? They will say you remained neuter from fear, and not from good-will. They will oblige you to be a spectator of the combat, however it may be decided. Call to mind what happened to Metius, the Alban chief, who, retiring to an eminence with the design of declaring himself the victor, was dragged to pieces between four horses by the order of Tullus Hostilius. Take my advice, awake from your drowsiness, and, before it is too late, perform your duty. To



remain inactive, when all the world is in motion, resembles death rather than sleep.'

This letter had no effect upon the dauphin. He passed the winter at Avignon, and went not to Paris till July following, where some business called him.

Petrarch speaks of a little journey that he took about this time with a man whose rank was superior to his judgment; and in a letter, wrote thirty years after to Philip of Cabassole, he gives this account of it :

'This great person, whose society was displeasing to me, invited me to go with him to St. Beaume. I constantly opposed his entreaties; but cardinal Colonna, to whom I could refuse nothing, joined in them. I was obliged to comply, and suffered myself to be dragged thither. We passed three days and three nights in that sacred and horrible cavern. Weary of the society I came with against my will, I wandered frequently into the neighbouring forests. I had sometimes recourse to my usual method of dispelling the vexation one feels in disagreeable society. My imagination brought to my view my absent friends, and I conversed with them in my thoughts as if present. I had not long had the happiness of knowing you; but you came to my aid on this occasion. I thought

I saw you seated near, and conversing with me in my grotto.'

Gerard, the brother of Petrarch, who was with him in this journey, took this opportunity to visit the monastery of the Carthusians, which is only two leagues from St. Beaume, and confirmed himself in the project he had already conceived of becoming a Carthusian.

Italy was still in commotion, and all the rest of Europe. The bishop of Verona was murdered in a fray, and Azon de Correge and William de Pastrengo were sent to Avignon to represent this affair to the pope. Petrarch, who was then at Vacluse, no sooner heard of their arrival, than he flew to Avignon, eager to see his dear friend. But hardly had he set foot in that city, when he felt his wound open again. Convinced that he had no resource but in flight, and that he had not a moment to lose, he returned that very night to his retreat, without seeing those dear friends whom he sought with so much ardour. After Petrarch was settled at Vacluse, whenever he made a journey to Avignon, he lodged in a little house belonging to Lelius, who was at Rome with the bishop of Lombes. As soon as William de Pastrengo heard that Petrarch was come to see him, he went immediately to this house; but



finding no one there, he left the following billet:

‘Where are you, my dear Petrarch? I knocked at the door of my friend Lelius. I called; no one made answer. Come out of your den, I beseech you, and shew yourself to a friend who longs to behold you.’

Petrarch returned this answer:

‘You were astonished not to find me at Avignon, where I formerly was so happy to see you. But you ought to be still more surprised that, having quitted the country at the season when it is most agreeable to me, I should return again in so much haste without having embraced you. Listen to my reasons for a conduct so very singular. The sun is going to set, and your courier hastens me. I have not time to inform you of my sufferings in the city you are in: perceiving that the only means of recovering my health was to leave it, I took this step, notwithstanding the efforts of all my friends to detain me. Alas! their friendship serves only to my destruction. I came into this solitude, to seek a shelter from the tempest; and to live a little for myself, before I was called to die. I was near the mark I aimed at; I felt, with extreme joy, my mind was more at ease; the life which I led seemed

to me to approach to that of the blessed in heaven. But behold the force of habit and of passion; I return often, though led by no business, into that odious city. I cast myself into the nets in which I was before ensnared. I know not what wind drives me from the port into that stormy sea where I have been so often shipwrecked. I am no sooner there, than I feel I am in a vessel tossed on every side. I see the firmament on fire, the sea rage, and rocks ready to dash me in pieces. Death presents itself to my eyes; and, what is worse than death, I am weary of my present life, and dread that which is to come.

‘This is all the apology I can make at present for not having had the pleasure of seeing you. The cares which consume my heart seized upon me as soon as I set foot in Avignon. They threatened me as a rebellious slave who had broken his fetters. To avoid the new ones they were preparing, I fled with precipitation. I departed at night, not daring to attempt it by day. Touched with my condition, you will pardon me for not seeing you. You will plead my cause in the world, where they consider it as madness my quitting the town to live in solitude.’

William de Pastrengo made this answer:



‘ Your precipitate flight, my dear Petrarch, displeased me extremely; with grief I found myself deprived of your conversation. Is it easy to bear the absence of a friend whose presence is so delightful? Your letter came very seasonably to dissipate my chagrins, and refresh my mind after the fatigues of business. I learn with pleasure, that you have forced open the door of your prison, and burst the chains that bound you: that, after having weathered the violent storm, you are at last arrived at the port you aimed at, and lead in it a life of reflection and tranquillity.

‘ I see from hence all you do at Vaucluse in the course of the day. At sun-rise, awakened by the concert of the woods and the murmurs of your fountains, you climb up the dewy hills, from whence you see under you beautiful and well-cultivated fields, and perhaps the sea covered over with sails. You have always your table-book with you, to which you commit every moment some new production of your mind. When the sun shines on the horizon you go into your little house, to a repast simple as those of Curius and Fabricius. This is soon followed by a short sleep; after which, to avoid the heat, you enter into the valley, where, when the sun begins to decline, the shadows of the moun-

tains lengthen towards the east. I think I see that marvellous fountain which seems to spring out of the rock, from whence, gushing forth in shining waves, it flows in a beautiful river which waters the valley.

‘ I discover that tremendous cavern which you enter when the water is low, and breathe a cool air in the burning heats of summer; that grotto suspended on waters more transparent than glass; and I behold you seated in the shade, feasting your eyes on those delightful prospects. From hence viewing the things of the world as a shadow that is passing away, you renounce them to employ your time in such productions as the Nymphs and the Muses applaud. When you leave these contemplations, your hands are empty, but your tables are full. But think not to possess alone the treasures of your mind. Mine is never absent, but partakes with you an enjoyment as useful as it is agreeable.

‘ Adieu, my dear Petrarch. Forget not your other self.’

1339. William de Pastrengo remained a year at Avignon, occupied with the negociation he was charged with, and in which he succeeded. He went to Vaucluse whenever he



could steal a few hours from his business, and assisted Petrarch in the cultivation of his garden.

Petrarch, after this, made several journies to Avignon. He sometimes fancied himself cured: but, like Virgil's hind, he always carried about with him the fatal arrow.

'I am weary,' says he, 'of my tears, which I shed day and night, and of feeling that I am the wretched object of my own aversion. At my sepulchre I would not have your name engraved upon my tomb; a testimony to future ages, that by the darts of Laura I was bereft of life. Accept rather this tender and faithful heart; treat it with more kindness; dry up my tears, and speak peace to my soul!'

Petrarch was in the unhappy state peculiar to a love tender like his, when directed to an improper object, and whose society he could therefore obtain very rarely, and for short intervals only: he knew not how to think, or how to act; he was irresolute and miserable: when he found himself more at liberty, he wished for his chains; when oppressed by their weight, he sighed for liberty. This, it must be owned, is a melancholy situation of the human mind, and the dreadful consequence of a mis-

placed affection; and, whatever palliations may be drawn in excuse for Petrarch, who lived in a dark age, under the clouds of superstition, which at that time covered the world, no apology can be made with justice at present for those whose characters resemble his in this unhappy point of view, since the light both of sacred and moral truth, now clearly conveyed to all, rejects all sophistry in respect to the internal disposition, as well as the outward conduct; and condemns as certainly the inward encouragement of the passion, as the outward commission of the crime.

Even Petrarch himself seems to have felt this truth, and censured his own conduct on these principles, as well as bitterly lamented the sufferings it caused him, in the dialogue he draws between himself and St. Augustin. The following sentiments, drawn from some sonnets he wrote about this time, addressed to the eyes of Laura, do also fully prove these sufferings, and are too descriptive of Laura, to be omitted.

‘Bright eyes! where Love has established his empire! it is to you I address myself. My Muse is cold and languid, but the subject I am upon will cherish and inspire it. To those who



sing your praise you give the wings of love, which elevates them far above all that is gross and terrestrial. Borne upon these wings, I dare express the feelings which have long been concealed in my heart.

‘Ye faithful witnesses of the life I lead; ye fields and flowers, ye mountains, woods, and vallies, which surround me; how often have ye heard me call death to my succour! for she who wounds is not touched with my distress.

‘Bright eyes! serene beyond expression! I complain not of you, though transfixed by your darts, from which I cannot fly: behold the paleness of my visage, and then judge the condition to which you have reduced me!

‘But grief makes me wander; rather would I die in their presence, than live deprived of their influence.

‘Yes, charming Laura! I discover in your eyes a light which points out the path, and guides me in the road to heaven. By a long and delightful study, I read in them all that passes in your soul. It is this view excites me to virtue, raises me above the joys of sense, and leads me to true glory: it spreads over my heart that inexpressible repose which fills it with delight, and renders it insensible to every

other object. In this state of enjoyment, my thoughts, my words, and my actions, bear the stamp of immortality !

‘ The happiest lovers, the brightest minions of fortune, have never felt my joy, when indulged with those tender regards bestowed by love and Laura. I see it with grief ; nature has not formed me worthy of these heavenly regards ; but it is my ambition to become so. If I can purify my heart, if I can detach it from every inferior impulse, perhaps a good name will compensate for my want of endowments. This is certain, that I shall never find consolation, but in those transporting emotions which are the most exquisite gratifications to a chaste and tender heart.

‘ In past ages men, filled with a noble emulation, traversed the seas and the mountains, to seek from a distant soil things that were rare and excellent. As for me, I need not travel far, for I find every good thing in the eyes I adore.

‘ As a pilot who, in the obscurity of the night tossed by the tempest, raises his eyes towards the heavens to direct him in his course, so I, in the storms of my passions, turn towards my bright and polar stars. These are my directors ; they are my guides in every step that



I take. O Laura! I am nothing without you. If, cultivated by your kind hand, I should produce any fruit, the glory, the felicity, will be yours.'

We will now return to the affairs of Italy.

Benedict XII. drew to Avignon the best artists, to assist in raising that enormous edifice which he had planned for himself and his successors.

Painting began at this time to revive. Giotto, the pupil of Cimabue, who raised this art from its ashes, died in 1336. He left a pupil who followed his style of painting, and who had worked with him in Rome, at that famous Mosaic picture representing the bark of St. Peter tossed by the tempest. This pupil of Giotto was called Simon Martini, and sometimes Simon de Sienna, because he was born in that city. He attached himself to his master, and followed him to Rome, where he executed some pictures that established his reputation. He worked afterwards with success in Tuscany, always in the manner of Giotto. After his death, Benedict invited him in a very pressing manner, says Visari, to Avignon. He intended to have the history of the martyrs painted by him, for the ornament of his palace.

Simon was not famous for design, as is evident from some pictures of his at Pisa, the subjects of which are taken from the life of St. Renier; but he had invention, and succeeded admirably in portraits. When he came to Avignon, his behaviour gained him the love and esteem of all the prelates, and he soon became acquainted with Petrarch. He loved his countrymen, and, above all, men of genius; and he attached himself very sincerely to the Siennese poet: a certain affinity which subsists between poetry and painting contributed to strengthen the band of their union. Simon held the same rank among the painters as Petrarch among the poets.

Petrarch desired his friend to draw a small picture of Laura, so small as to be portable. Simon, who was delighted to exercise his talents on so celebrated a beauty, gave Petrarch this mark of his friendship with the greatest readiness. There is yet at Avignon, in the house of Sade, an old picture of Laura, which was probably a copy of this given to Petrarch. Laura appears in it dressed in red, holding a flower in her hand, with a sweet and modest countenance, rather inclining to tenderness.

Petrarch complimented Simon on this oc-



casion in one of his poems. 'What a happiness,' says Vafari, (who was himself an eminent painter in the sixteenth century,) 'for a painter to be united with a great poet! He shall draw a little picture, which can only last a certain number of years, because painting is subject to all sorts of accidents, and for his reward he shall be immortalized by verses, which are beyond the reach of time!'

Whether the imagination of Simon was so filled with Laura, that it was ever present when he proposed to paint a beautiful woman, or whether he meant by this to oblige and express his acknowledgments to Petrarch, it is certain he drew her figure on many occasions in which she had no concern.

On a painting in Fresco she is dressed in green at the feet of St. George on horseback, who delivers her from the dragon. This piece is under the portico of Notre-Dame de Dons, and is much damaged by the injuries of the weather; Laura is placed in another of his pictures in the church of St. Marie Novella at Florence. Among the females who represent the pleasures of the world, we see Laura dressed in green, with a little flame rising out of her breast, her gown strewn over with flowers. In another picture in the same church, Pe-

trarch is drawn standing by a knight of Rhodes. At Sienna also they shew a picture of the Virgin drawn by Simon, which is a portrait of Laura; she is there dressed in green, with her eyes fixed on the ground, which was her common attitude. All these pictures of Laura were not thought sufficient by Simon to express his love for Petrarch. There was a manuscript of Virgil upon vellum, with the commentaries of Servius, which he greatly prized. Simon painted on the first leaf of this manuscript very elegant figures, which represented all the subject of the *Æneid*. This is to be seen at Milan, in the Ambrosian library.

1340. The first years of Petrarch's residence at Vaucuse were employed in a deep study of the Roman history, and he undertook to write it from Romulus to Titus: an immense work in an age when manuscripts were rare, and the subject still buried in obscurity. His imagination was warmed with the fine passages in the life of Scipio Africanus. By a sort of instinct, he had from childhood given Scipio the preference to the heroes of ancient, as Stephen Colonna to all those of modern, Rome. He wished to write an epic poem on this subject. At that time this was the utmost effort of the human mind, and the most probable means of



gaining him the laurel crown, for which honour he had long sighed. He was not discouraged by difficulties. He set about and prosecuted this work with so much ardour, that in the space of a year the poem was far advanced. He gave it the name of *Africa*, because it recited the victories of Scipio over the Carthaginians in the second Punic war. If Petrarch had known the poem of Silius Italicus on this subject, he would hardly have undertaken it; but that being concealed in a monastery, was not found till 1415: that of Ennius he was acquainted with. 'Ennius,' says he, 'has sung fully of Scipio; but, in the opinion of Valerius Maximus, his style is harsh and vulgar. There is no elegant poem which has for its subject the glorious actions of that conqueror of Hannibal. I am resolved to celebrate his victories in the best manner I am able.'

The bishop of Cavaillon, fearing that his close application to this work would destroy his health, which appeared to him already injured, came one day, and asked him for the key of his library. Petrarch, not aware of his intention, gave it him immediately. The bishop, after having locked up his books and his papers, said to him, 'I command you to remain ten days

without reading or writing.' Petrarch obeyed, but it was with extreme reluctance. The first day that he passed after this interdiction appeared to him longer than a year; the second he had a violent head-ach from morning to night; and on the third he felt some symptoms of a fever. The bishop, touched with his condition, restored to him in the same moment his keys and his health.

Notwithstanding his enthusiasm for Scipio, Petrarch was not so absorbed but that he found time for other studies. He had long desired to learn the Greek language, that he might read Homer and Plato, of whose works there were at that time no tolerable translations.

'The name of Homer,' says he, 'is hardly known to those barbarians from whom we are only separated by the Alps. Would to God we were divided from them by the ocean itself! The book which passes under the name of Homer is only an abridgment of the Iliad, done by a schoolboy whose name is unknown.'

The Greek language was never totally lost in Italy, but at the time I am speaking of there were hardly six persons who were acquainted with the rudiments of it; and though Dante, in his famous poem, cites several Greek au-



thors, Manneti and Philephe assure us that he was ignorant of that language.

Petrarch was so happy this year as to have an opportunity of learning it at Avignon; and this engaged him to make a longer stay in this city than he had ever done since his establishment at Vacluse. Barnard Borlaam, a Greek by descent, but born in Calabria, a monk of St. Basil, and abbe of St. Sauviur at Constantino-ple, came to Avignon on an embassy from Andronicus, the young Greek emperor, to the pope, to procure a council for the reunion of the Greek and Roman churches, which had separated in the ninth century. The pretext for this schism was, that the Greeks believed the Holy Ghost proceeded immediately from the Father; the Latins, from the Father and the Son: and some dispute about the consecration of the holy bread. Borlaam brought letters of recommendation from Philip, king of France, and Robert, king of Naples, to facilitate the success of the negociation.

Boccace thus describes this Greek envoy, whom he knew at Naples:

‘Borlaam was a little man, with great knowledge and understanding. Greece has not, for many years, produced so wise a man. He was profoundly versed in all that relates to history,

in philosophy, and the Greek language; and from the princes and learned men in Constantinople he received certificates which attested the superiority of his abilities. He had a subtle and penetrating mind, and perfectly understood Euclid, Aristotle, and Plato. But he expressed with difficulty what he conceived with amazing ease and quickness.'

Petrarch was very solicitous to be acquainted with such a man as Borlaam, and fought with eagerness to be instructed in the Greek language. Borlaam, on his side, wished as much to be acquainted with the Latin tongue, which he knew only a little of, having been educated by masters who spoke that language. These views soon united them. They began by reading Plato. From this philosopher Petrarch drew many refined sentiments on the nature of love, the origin of souls, their transmigration, and their passage into the planets when disencumbered from the body. Petrarch would soon have become perfect in the Greek language, under this able master, had he continued at Avignon; but the bad success of his negotiation hastened his departure. Petrarch was in despair at losing his tutor; and Borlaam generously owned, that in this commerce he had learnt much more than he was able to teach.



The loss of one friend, however, was made up to Petrarch by the arrival of another, who was as necessary to regulate the motions of his heart as this Greek master was to increase the riches of his mind. This was father Dennis, whom Petrarch had so often consulted about his passion. He could not have arrived at a more fortunate moment; his patient wanted more than ever the exertion of his skill, for relapses are the rocks most to be feared, as well by the physician of the soul as the physician of the body. This wise Augustin, being advanced in years, thought it time to quit the pulpit, and the university of Paris, where he had appeared with great honor, to enjoy the sweets of repose in the bosom of his country, and came to Avignon with the intention of going by sea to Florence.

Petrarch did all he could to engage him to visit Vacluse, and finding him reluctant, he seconded his solicitations with a billet, as follows:

‘Can nothing induce you, my dear master, to come to my solitude? Neither the beauties of the place, nor the friendship you have always expressed for me? Will nothing tempt you to come to a friend solitary and abandoned? Will not my ardent request, and the

pity you must have for my condition, determine you to pass some days with your disciple, and honor his retreat with your presence? If these motives are not sufficient, permit me to employ others which appear to me irresistible. There is in this place a poplar tree of so immense a size, that it covers with its shade not only the river and its banks, but also a considerable extent beyond them. They tell us, that king Robert of Naples, invited by the beauty of this spot, came here to unburden his mind from the weight of public affairs, and enjoy in this delightful shade the sweets of repose. He brought with him his queen, as famous for her beauty as her birth; Clemence, his niece, the widow of a great king; and a prodigious train of lords and ladies.

‘ While this brilliant court amused themselves in wandering over the meadows, hunting in the woods, drawing the ponds, and contriving a thousand rural games on the banks of the river, the king, seated on the enamelled lawn under the shade of this fine tree, was buried in deep thought. His penetrating mind, accustomed to pry into the bowels of the earth, sought perhaps some secret of nature; or perhaps he was conversing with Fortune, and saying, “ You may continue to overwhelm me



with favors, but I am not to be blinded by your deceitful careffes; for I know that death purfues, and will foon raife me beyond the circle of them all." He might, perhaps, be meditating fome great project, to punifh the perfidious prince who fo unjuftly withheld a part of his kingdom. Whatever were the reflections which occupied the mind of this great man, they were certainly fublime, and worthy of him.

' And will not you, my dear mafter, come with tranfport to a place fo honored? Will not you revere the tree that covered him, and kifs with tranfports the facred footfteps of a prince who will be held in veneration by pofterity?'

The king, of whom Petrarch gives fo high an eulogium, in which flattery had no part, was Robert, fon of Charles II. and grandfon of Charles I. He was the third king of Naples, of the houfe of Anjou; and was crowned at Avignon the fame year that pope Clement V. eftablifhed the holy fee in that city, of which Robert was the lord in his own right as count of Provence.

' He was,' fays Petrarch, ' the only true king of his time, for I call none kings but thofe who rule themfelves. In him every virtue was

united; he was a good master, a good father, a good husband: religious from principle, courageous from nature, pacific for the good of his people. He was the only prince who loved letters, and encouraged men of learning. He received them with kindness, and attended with pleasure to their works. He loved to communicate what he knew, and he blushed not to learn even in his advanced age. One of his favorite sayings was, "We acquire knowledge by giving and receiving instruction."

'Neither the capriciousness of fortune, whose favors and whose cruelties he had alternately experienced, the ignorance of his time, nor the contempt in which science was held, could detach him from study. In the midst of the most important affairs, in the tumult of war, day and night he would always have his books about him. He became by this means a philosopher, theologian, mathematician, astronomer, and even a physician; and was besides well versed in history, belles lettres, and all the sciences.'

Boccace, who was soon after this united with Petrarch, being at Naples before he produced those works which have since rendered him so celebrated, obtained from this prince the most gracious reception, and knew him



well. 'He is,' says he, 'the wisest king that has reigned since Solomon. All the world was of the same opinion. He was, however, a believer in judicial astrology, which was the folly of the age he lived in.'

This prince made a voyage into Provence in 1319, and resided at Avignon four years, in the court of John XXII. who owed his elevation to Robert, and had a sincere regard for him. And it was at this time he went to visit Vacluse, the account of which Petrarch gave in the above letter.

Father Dennis yielded at last to the solicitations of Petrarch, who had addressed this monk with great skill, as he had a singular attachment and veneration for king Robert. Their union began at Avignon, and was founded upon a great similarity of taste and knowledge, and had been kept up ever since by an interchange of letters, in which the most important questions were discussed. Unhappily for Petrarch, father Dennis, who was in haste to return to his country, made but a short stay at Avignon. On his arrival at Florence, he found that city more agitated than ever by the intestine commotions already mentioned.

In July of the same year there was an eclipse of the sun in the sign of Cancer, 'which hap-

pens,' says Villani, 'only once in a hundred years; and announces, according to the ancient astrologers, very heavy calamities.' On this occasion their judgment proved true; a great deal of mischief was done by violent storms, and by the plague and famine, at Florence. These calamities determined father Dennis to yield to the invitations of king Robert, who had pressed him a long time to come and end his days in his court. The king received him with open arms, and gave him an apartment in his own palace, that he might enjoy more of his society. By a public act he bestowed on him houses for the foundation of a convent and a church at Carbonora, which is a suburb of Naples.

In the first conversations which father Dennis had with this prince, he spoke to him of Petrarch as of a man whom he highly loved and esteemed. Robert already knew Petrarch by reputation, and the eulogy of father Dennis augmented the good opinion he had conceived of his character, and determined him to send him a letter. It is much to be lamented that this letter is lost. He enclosed in it an epitaph for the judgment of Petrarch on the niece we have mentioned; and 'who was,' says Villani, 'a queen of great virtue and knowledge.' He



takes the occasion to lament, as a Christian and a philosopher, the miseries of life, and the necessity of death; opposed to which, there is no consolation but in the hopes of immortality. It is easy to imagine the joy of Petrarch when he received this mark of goodness from a prince of whom he had a long time conceived the highest idea, and whose favor and approbation he passionately desired. This was the answer he returned:

‘ I know not which I ought most to admire in the letter I have received, the justness and dignity of the thoughts, or the graces of the style. I did not imagine the human mind capable of expressing its ideas on so sublime a subject with so much variety, strength, and precision. The beginning of your letter, in which you paint in so lively a manner the misfortunes of human life, made so strong an impression on me, that I almost repented I ever came into the world: but the hand which made the wound contributed to heal it. What you say of the immortality of the soul relieved my drooping spirits, and I then felt a kind of joy that I was born mortal. After having broken the chains which imprison the soul, and cast off the outward covering, how delightful to be clothed with that immortal

robe which will render our bodies pure and incorruptible! This expectation, which our faith presents to us, was unknown to the heathen philosophers: but they felt that the soul was not to die. Pherecydes was the first among them who openly maintained this truth; Epicurus the only one who denied it. From Pherecydes it passed to Pythagoras, from Pythagoras to Socrates, and then to Plato, who composed a treatise on that subject, which Cato of Utica studied, to prepare himself for death. And Cicero established this doctrine in his discourses on friendship, old age, and many other parts of his works.

‘But to whom do I say these things? fool that I am! Not only to the greatest of kings, but to the greatest of philosophers. Deign to pardon me, illustrious prince, if, carried away by my zeal for the subject, I sought to confirm, by foreign testimonies, a truth which verifies itself, and makes me sigh for that day so generally dreaded by mortals. I envy the fate of that niece whose epitaph you vouchsafed to send me; whose humble and courteous manners, though a sovereign princess, rendered her truly worthy of the name she bore. Though taken from hence in the bloom of youth and beauty, universally regretted, as well in the



kingdom where she was born, as in that to which she succeeded, she yet appears to me the most happy, because you have immortalized her here, and she is enjoying a felicity that is everlasting. How then can any one call that princess dead who lives in fame on earth, and is exalted to bliss in heaven? Your epitaph will transmit the memory of your niece with your own to posterity : and it will be said of her, as Alexander said of Achilles, "How happy is she to be celebrated by so great a poet!" But I fear I shall weary you by the length of my letter. The elegant conciseness of yours warns me to conclude. I pray heaven to preserve a life crowned equally with the laurels of Mars and of Apollo.'

Some time after this Petrarch received a letter from father Dennis, inviting him to come and enjoy with him the tranquillity and bounty he possessed ; to which Petrarch made this reply :

' Since the time I have ceased to hear your friendly voice, nothing has given me so much pleasure as the report spread at Avignon, that you was gone to Naples to the court of king Robert. Nothing, in my opinion, contributes so much to the delight and tranquillity of life as the intercourse and conversation of wise

men. You understand me, but I will speak with more clearness. Cicero said, "Who was greater than Themistocles in Greece?" And I say, with still more truth, "Who is greater than king Robert, not only in Italy, but even throughout Europe?"

'In this view, it is not the lustre of his crown that dazzles, or his power that weighs with me; it is his mind, his manners, that I admire. True kings are more rarely met with than we imagine: we should see fewer sceptres and crowns, if these alone were honored with them. It is a folly to give that name to the slaves of passion, who live like brutes rather than men. I think Robert the only one who deserves that title; for he has shewn, by a thousand instances of patience and moderation, that he knows how to govern himself.

'This prince has sent for you, and you have obeyed his summons. A perfect conformity in your studies and dispositions unites you: this is quite natural. If I was speaking to any other but yourself, I should say that the king could not procure himself a greater relief under the fatigues of government. As to you, you will obtain at Naples that inward peace which you could not have possessed amidst the disorders in Tuscany. When I heard you were there, "How



happy," cried I, "is father Dennis! He will now lead a peaceful life." I will soon follow you! You know that I aspire to the poetic laurel; and I would owe it only to king Robert. If I am so happy to be summoned by him, I will fly immediately, and consecrate to him my talents and my studies.'

From time immemorial the laurel had been the reward of valour, merit, and genius. Virgil speaks of it in the *Æneid*, where they crowned the victors in the Pythian games. The Romans early adopted this practice. The laurel being consecrated to Apollo, the god of poetry, it was natural to crown poets with it as well as conquerors. Petrarch says in his *Africa*, speaking in the character of Ennius to Scipio, 'Permit us to partake with you in the honor of this crown. If glory belongs to the talents of the mind as well as to military prowess, it is but just to adorn with laurel the brows of poets as well as the brows of heroes. This tree, by its perpetual and beautiful verdure, announces immortality both to the one and the other.' It may be added, the passion which Petrarch had for Laura rendered him still more desirous of this honor. This custom had, however, been abolished at Rome more than a thousand years.

At last the moment came when he arrived at the height of his wishes; and the manner of obtaining this honor was still more flattering than the honor itself.

In August of the year 1340, being at Vaucluse, occupied with the thoughts of Laura and his poem, at the third hour, that is to say about nine in the morning, Petrarch received a letter from the Roman senate, who urged him with many pressing entreaties to come to Rome to receive the crown of laurel. On the same day arrived a courier from Robert Bardi, chancellor of the university of Paris, in which this friend and countryman joined every motive which was capable of inducing him to give the preference to Paris for the performance of this ceremony. Nothing could be more flattering to Petrarch than this honorable concurrence of the two greatest cities in the world, disputing which should have the glory of crowning him. This was the brightest period of his life.

In the first moments of his intoxication, being uncertain how to determine, he wrote thus to Avignon to cardinal Colonna:

‘ Who would have guessed that such honors would have pursued me amidst my rocks? I know there is nothing solid in this world, and



that we run after shadows. But I cannot help comparing my situation to that of Syphax, the most powerful king in Africa, who received at the same time the ambassadors of Rome and Carthage contending for his alliance. I own to you I know not which to prefer: I am agitated by powerful motives on both sides.

At Paris there never was a poet crowned. I shall be the first; this novelty pleases me, and disposes me to that side. But the veneration I have for Rome, where the greatest poets have received the laurel, inclines the balance to the other. Friendship draws me to Paris; but Rome has king Robert for its neighbour, and I know no person more capable of judging of my abilities. You see my perplexity. I fear lest in my joy I should decide improperly. Deign to advise me. To whom but you can I address myself? You, who are my pilot, my support, and my glory!

We see in this letter, that Petrarch inclined towards Rome; and the answer of the cardinal was conformable to this inclination; to which Petrarch thus replies:

‘I receive with gratitude, and I embrace with pleasure, the advice you have given me. You love your country, but you prefer truth above all. I shall go where you command;

and if any censure the choice I have made, I will shield myself under your name.'

1341. Petrarch went to Rome in the beginning of the spring ; but as he had not such an opinion of his works as to believe they merited this great honor, he determined to submit to a public examination, which is never exacted of one so established in reputation. He had a mind also to pay this literary homage to the king of Naples ; and he requested the permission to present himself at his tribunal, to undergo this examination. Robert was pleased with the preference given him on this occasion.

The joy of Petrarch would have been complete, if he could have flattered himself with finding at Rome the bishop of Lombes, and to have had this dear friend witness of his glory. But as soon as he had extinguished the fire of discord, and established peace in his family, he returned to his church, which had been seven years deprived of its pastor. His soul, which was without ceasing occupied in weighing the importance of his duties, always determined in favor of those which were the most serviceable to mankind. The grief of the Romans was extreme to lose this tutelary angel, who had re-established harmony and peace among



them, and several times preserved their city from fire and pillage. This worthy prelate was so eager to return to those sheep that Providence had committed to his care in a barbarous country, that he only passed through Avignon, and stopped but a moment to embrace his brother the cardinal; nor did he see Petrarch, who was at that time at Vacluse; from whence hearing of his departure from Rome he wrote these lines:

‘I am going to Rome, where I shall need you above all others; you, who are my delight and glory, must at least be with me in mind.

‘You will say, perhaps, “Why this ardor, this labour, this fatigue? What is the end of it all? Will it render you more wise or virtuous? No. This crown will only serve to expose you to public view, and in consequence to the darts of envy. Science and virtue, are they birds which require branches of trees on which to fix their nests? What use will you make of those laurels with which your brow is to be encircled?” To all these I shall content myself with replying in the words of the wise Hebrew, “Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity.” Such are the follies of men. Take care of yourself, and be favorable to me.’

After having written this letter, Petrarch set

out for Marseilles, and embarked from thence for Naples, notwithstanding his dread of the sea.

Robert learned with pleasure that he was arrived in his kingdom; he gave him the most honorable reception in the presence of all his court; and in the conversations he had with him, Robert found that the friends of this poet had not imposed upon him. Petrarch, on his side, admired the depth of this prince's mind, and the variety of his knowledge. He was extremely pleased with the situation of Naples, on account of the softness of the climate, and the delightful verdure of the country around it. The tomb of Virgil is near Naples; and it is said a laurel sprung up round it, and flourished for several ages.

Robert was curious to see the poem called *Africa*; it had made much noise, though the draught of it was barely sketched out. Petrarch with difficulty confided so unformed a work to this prince. Robert was so pleased with it, that he hinted a wish to have it dedicated to him when it should be made public. Petrarch engaged, and kept his word after the death of that prince; a singular mark of respect. This poem was the most indifferent of Petrarch's works; and he blushed for it some years after.



But Robert was no poet. 'I did not think,' says he, after he had conversed with Petrarch, 'that, under the frivolous appearance of poetic fiction, such sublime ideas could be contained.' This prince, to give more weight to his own approbation, appointed a day to examine Petrarch in form; when questions were proposed to him by Robert on all subjects of learning; and this examination was continued the two following days. Then Robert, after a great eulogy on Petrarch, declared that he merited the laurel crown, and had letters patent drawn up, by which he certified that, after a severe examination, he was judged worthy to receive that honor in the capitol. Robert wished Petrarch to receive this crown at Naples; but he represented to this prince, that he was desirous of obtaining it on the same theatre where Virgil, Horace, and so many other poets of the first order, had before been crowned. This prince had the complaisance to enter into his reasons; and to complete his kindness, he testified his regret that his advanced age would not permit him to go to Rome, and crown Petrarch himself, repeating several times that his dignity as a king should have been no obstacle.

As Robert could not himself accompany Petrarch, he named John Borrili, one of his first

courtiers, to be his proxy upon this occasion. Boccace speaks of Borrili as a man of great abilities, and a good poet. Petrarch compares him to Ovid. He was well descended, his family had been highly honored by Charles I. of Naples, and he was the favorite of king Robert.

Petrarch, a little time before his departure from Naples, had a conversation with Robert, which proves the great taste this prince had for letters, and the honor in which he held them. He asked Petrarch why he thought so late of paying him a visit?

‘Great king,’ replied our poet, ‘I have long wished for this happiness, but fortune has always opposed me. I own, to my shame, that the perils I had to encounter by sea and by land deterred me.’

The conversation after this falling upon Philip of Valois, king of France, Robert said to Petrarch, ‘Have you never been at his court?’ ‘I have not even had the least desire to go,’ replied Petrarch. ‘And why so?’ said the prince, smiling. ‘Because,’ replied Petrarch, ‘it seems to me, that I could only be a useless and a troublesome person to an ignorant king. I would much rather live in an honest mediocrity, than



drag a useless life in a court where no one spoke my language.'

'It occurs to me,' said the king, 'that the eldest son of Philip loves study.' 'I have also heard it,' replied Petrarch, 'but it does not please the father; they even say he looks upon the preceptors of his son as his enemies.'

At these words Robert, seized with horror and indignation, after a short silence, cried out, raising his eyes to heaven, 'How different are the tastes of men! For my own part, I swear that letters are dearer to me than my crown; and if I must renounce one or the other, I would immediately sacrifice my diadem.'

When Petrarch went to take leave of king Robert, this prince, after engaging his promise that he would visit him again very soon, took off the robe he wore that day, and begged he would accept it, and wear it at his coronation; and, that he might express his affection by every possible means, he had a breviate drawn up, and given to Petrarch, by which he conferred on him the place of general almoner: great interest was always made for this post on account of the privileges attached to it; the principal of which were exemption from pay-

ing the tithes of benefices to the king, and a dispensation from residence.

There was at this time at Naples, 1341, a man of extraordinary learning, to whom Boccace gives singular commendation; this was Paul de Perouse, who had many years been librarian to king Robert. As he was very curious, and possessed of all sorts of knowledge, he had collected, by order of his master, a great number of foreign books in history and poetry. His search after these books had united him very strongly with Borlaam, the wife Grecian, who has already been mentioned. It was by his means he obtained from Greece those books he could not meet with among the Latins. He composed an immense work, entitled, 'Collections,' which was full of erudition, and comprehended all that had been said by the Greeks and the Latins on the Pagan divinities.



## BOOK III.

ORSO, count of Anguillara, was senator of Rome when Petrarch arrived there, and was to continue in office but a few weeks longer. We have seen that Petrarch passed some time in his castle at Capranica. Orso, who was very desirous of crowning Petrarch himself, wrote to inform him he must begin his journey immediately, if he would give him this satisfaction.

Petrarch set out from Naples in April with John Borrili, who having some affairs to transact in the way, took another road, promising to meet him at Rome. The day after Petrarch got there, not finding Borrili, he dispatched a courier to hasten him, the day of the ceremony being fixed. But he came back without him, and the count of Anguillara would not permit any delay.

The assembly was convoked early in the morning on Easter-day, which happened to be very serene, and favorable to the solemnity. The trumpets sounded; and the people, eager

to view a ceremony which had been discontinued for so many years, ran in crowds to behold it. The streets were strewed with flowers, and the windows filled with ladies dressed in the most sumptuous manner, who sprinkled as much perfumed waters on the poet as would serve for a year in the kingdom of Spain.

Petrarch appeared at last at the capitol, preceded by twelve young men in scarlet habits. These were chosen out of the first families of Rome, and recited his verses; while he, adorned with the robe of state which the king of Naples had given him, followed, in the midst of six of the principal citizens clothed in green, with crowns of flowers on their heads; after whom came the senator, accompanied by the first men of the council. When he was seated in his place, Petrarch made a short harangue upon a verse drawn from Virgil: after which, having cried three times, 'Long live the people of Rome! Long live the senator! God preserve them in liberty!' he kneeled down before the senator, who, after a short discourse, took from his head a crown of laurel, and put it upon Petrarch's, saying, 'This crown is the reward of merit.' Then Petrarch recited a fine sonnet on the heroes of Rome; but this sonnet is not in his works.



The people shewed their joy and approbation by loud and repeated shouts; by clapping their hands; and crying out several times, 'Long flourish the Capitol? Long live the Poet!' Stephen Colonna then spoke; and, as he truly loved Petrarch, he gave him that praise which comes from the heart.

Petrarch's friends at Rome shed tears of joy; and, though he was himself in a sort of intoxication, he felt at the bottom of his soul that such honors were incapable of conferring true happiness, and far exceeded his desert. 'I blushed,' says he, 'at the applauses of the people, and the unmerited commendations with which I was overwhelmed.'

When the ceremony in the capitol was ended, Petrarch was conducted in pomp with the same retinue to the church of St. Peter, where, after a solemn mass, and returning thanks to God for the honor he had received, he took off his crown to place it among the offerings, and hung it up on the arch of the temple.

The same day the count of Anguillara had letters patent drawn up, by which the senators, after a very flattering preface, declare Petrarch to have merited the title of a great poet and historian; and that at Rome, and in every other place, by the authority of king Robert, the

Roman senate, and the people of Rome, he should have full liberty to read and comment on poetry and history, or on any of the works of the ancients, and to publish any of his own productions, and to wear on all solemn occasions the crown of laurel, beech, or myrrh, and the poetic dress. In fine, they declare him a citizen of Rome, with all the privileges thereof, as a reward for the affection he has always expressed for the city and republic.

Petrarch was then brought to the palace of the Colonnas, where a magnificent feast was prepared for him, at which were assembled all the nobility and men of letters in Rome.

It cannot, after this view, be uninteresting to join with it what Petrarch thought of this event in his maturer life.

‘These laurels,’ says he, ‘which encircled my head, were too green; had I been of riper age and understanding, I should not have sought them. Old men love only what is useful; young men run after appearances, without regarding their end. This crown rendered me neither more wise nor eloquent; it only served to raise envy, and deprive me of the repose I enjoyed. From that time tongues and pens were sharpened against me: my friends be-



came my enemies, and I suffered the just effects of my confidence and presumption.'

It was not the fault of Borrili that he came not to Rome to assist at the coronation of Petrarch. He fell into an ambuscade of the Hernici, from whom he at last with difficulty escaped.

Petrarch, desirous of avoiding the visits and compliments which follow such a ceremony, departed a few days after. Fortune thought proper to remind him, that pleasure and pain are closely allied in this life. Hardly was he got out of Rome with his train, when he fell into the hands of some banditti, with which the high roads were then infested. He escaped alive by a kind of miracle, and returned to Rome, where the peril he had been in caused a great disturbance; they gave him an escort, and he set out again the following day.

He arrived at Pisa the 20th of April, from whence he wrote an account of what had passed to king Robert and his friends at Avignon. He did not stay long there. Eager to display his crown at Avignon, and above all to the eyes of Laura, and then to lay it at the feet of the bishop of Lombes, he set out in the beginning of May, and went by land, choosing

rather to pass the Alps than trust his life to the mercy of the sea. In crossing Lombardy he turned out of the road to make a visit to Azon de Corregge at Parma.

Azon, with his brothers, had just gained a victory over the party that opposed them in Parma, and besought Petrarch to stay and enjoy with them the peace and felicity they had obtained. He excused himself, from the ties he had to cardinal Colonna; but they were so pressing, that he wrote the following letter to the cardinal:

‘Returning from Rome with my crown, I come to visit your friends at Parma, who have defeated their enemies, and are now in peaceable possession of this city. I was solicitous to give you this information, from which I know you will derive much pleasure. This city has changed its face; peace, liberty, and justice, which were banished, are returned, and the joy of the people are inconceivable. I could not resist the entreaties of your friends, who insisted I should pass the summer with them. Their politeness and goodness urge the impossibility of parting from me sooner; but in what can I be useful to them? Born as I am for solitude, and fond of leisure, I fly the noise of cities, and seek the silence of the fields. Your friends,



who know my sentiments, assure me of perfect tranquillity when time shall have calmed the present emotions of joy. You will see me again in the beginning of winter; sooner, if you command; later, if Fortune will have it so.'

Nothing could be happier than the first year of the government of the Correges at Parma; they acted as fathers, not masters, and administered justice with great wisdom; they suppressed all exorbitant taxes, and enriched those families whom the avarice of their enemies had reduced to beggary. Petrarch was in a manner associated with Azon and his brothers; and they did nothing without consulting him, which not a little flattered his self-love. And soon after his arrival at Parma, there happened a singular circumstance which did not contribute to lessen it.

A schoolmaster of Pontremoli, old and blind, who knew Petrarch only by fame, was desirous to see him, as he expressed it; and being informed he was at Naples, he set out on foot for that place, supporting himself on his son's shoulder. But he got there too late, for Petrarch was already set out for Rome. The king being acquainted with the motive of his journey, had a mind to see him. He appeared a sort of monster; his face resembled one which was in

bronze at Naples. The king said to him, 'If you have so much ambition to behold Petrarch, you must make haste and seek him in Italy, for he will not make a long stay; and if you miss him there, you will be obliged to go to France to satisfy your curiosity.' 'I must absolutely see him before I die,' replied the old man; I would go and seek him in the furthest East, if it was necessary, and death would give me time for so long a journey.' The king, admiring his enthusiasm, gave him money to defray his expences.

He went immediately to Rome, and, not finding Petrarch there, he came back to Pontremoli; but, when he heard he had stopped at Parma, he resolved to set out again, and seek him there: to do this he must cross the Appenines. The snows with which these mountains were entirely covered did not deter him. He thought it necessary to announce himself by some verses, which he sent to Petrarch, and they were not bad ones.

When he arrived at Parma, he was led to Petrarch's house, and as soon as he was near him, he gave himself up to the most excessive transports. He was lifted up by his son and one of his scholars, that he might embrace a head which, he said, had conceived such noble



ideas. He then took the hand of Petrarch, and said, 'Let me kiss that hand which has written such delightful things.' He passed three days at Parma, full of this enthusiasm: this singularity excited the curiosity of the inhabitants of that city. As the blind man had always a crowd about him, he said one day to Petrarch, 'I fear I am a burthen to you, but I cannot satisfy myself with beholding you, and it is but just you should suffer me to enjoy a pleasure for which I have travelled so far. The word behold, in the mouth of a blind man, having raised peals of laughter in the people around him, he turned towards Petrarch, and said, 'I take you for my witness; is it not true that, blind as I am, I see you better than all those laughers who look at you with both their eyes?'

Azon, the most generous of men, enchanted with the discourse of this good old man, and with his passion for Petrarch, overwhelmed him with presents, and he returned to Pontremoli highly gratified.

Petrarch, though extremely flattered by the friendship shewn him, was glad to steal from public life as often as he could, and to wander in the fields and woods, which were his greatest delight. One day, led on by his love of exer-

cise, he passed the river of Lenza, which is three leagues from Parma, and found himself in the territory of Rhegio, in a great forest, which is called the *Silva Piana*, or low wood, though it is situated upon a hill, from whence are discovered the Alps and all Cisalpine Gaul. He gives this description of the place in a letter to a friend :

‘ Aged oaks, whose heads seem to touch the clouds, shelter the avenues to this forest from the rays of the sun. The fresh breezes which descend from the neighbouring mountains, and many little rivulets which wind along, temper the violent heats. In the greatest droughts the earth is always covered with a soft verdure, and enamelled with flowers. Here all kinds of birds warble out their songs, and deer of every sort run sporting about. Nature has raised in the middle of this forest a theatre, which she seems to have formed expressly for poets. The rustling of the leaves, the singing of the birds, and the murmurs of the stream, invite to repose. The earth exhales a delicious odour. It is the theatre of Elysium. Even the shepherds and labourers revere this sacred place. Its beauty struck me: I felt myself all at once inspired by the Muses; and I made



some verses with the facility I had never before experienced.'

This fine situation revived so strongly in the mind of Petrarch his taste for solitude, that he was obliged, at his return to Parma, to seek a little house in a remote place, where he might be at ease, and sheltered from the ceremonies of public life. He found one at the end of the city, near the abbey of St. Anthony, which perfectly suited him. It had a garden watered by a little river.

'I have,' says he, 'a country in the middle of the town; and a town in the midst of the fields. When I am tired with being alone, I have only to step out, and I find society immediately; when I am weary of the world I re-enter my house, and again possess the delight of solitude. I enjoy here a repose, which the philosophers at Athens, the poets on Parnassus, and the anchorites in the deserts of Egypt, never knew. O, Fortune! leave in peace a man who wishes to lie concealed. Go out of his little house, and attack the palaces of kings.'

He was so pleased with this cottage, that he determined to purchase and rebuild it, as we see in a letter of his to William de Pastrengo:

‘ Are you curious to know what I think, what I wish, what I do? The life which I lead at present is a search after repose; and not flattering myself I shall find it on earth, I feel without fear that I am taking hasty steps towards the mansions of death. I would leave the prison in which my soul is confined.

‘ I dwell at Parma, and pass my life in the church, or in my garden; tired of the city, I wander oft into the woods. Though Fortune treats me more favorably, I have not changed my manner of living. I work with ardour at my Africa, without expecting any other reward but a vain and transitory glory. True glory, I know it well, is the reward of virtue alone. I have built a small house, such as suits the mediocrity of my station. There is little marble to be seen in it; I wish I was nearer your fine quarries, or that at least the Adige came to bathe our walls. The verses of Horace have cooled my ardour for building; they present to me my bust and my last dwelling; and I reserve my stones for my monument.

‘ If I perceive a little chink in my new walls, I find fault with the masons, and they reply, that all the art of man cannot render them firmer; that it is not astonishing new founda-



tions should give way a little; that mortal hands can build nothing that will be everlasting; and, in fine, that my house will be of longer duration than myself and my successors. Penetrated with the truth of their observations, I blushed, and said to myself, "Foolish man! make sure the foundations of thy earthly tabernacle, which is falling into decay! Render that firm while it is yet in thy power. Thy body will fall before thy building, and soon shalt thou be forced to quit both dwellings."

' These reflections would make me renounce my design, if shame did not retain me: would not the passengers laugh at me when they observed my walls hanging in the air? I proceed therefore, and hasten my work: but I am undetermined. Sometimes I content myself with a little house like that in the garden of Curius, or that in the field of the old man of whom Virgil speaks in his Georgics. Sometimes I give way to the idle fancy of raising my house to the clouds, and surpassing even the buildings of Babylon and Rome. The moment after I become modest again, and hate every idea that favors of luxury and pride. Thus does my soul float in perpetual uncertainties, and knows not where to fix. To see others

agitated in the same manner is all my consolation ; and I laugh at them, at myself, and at the world.'

After having viewed Petrarch for a long time surrounded with agreeable objects and flattering events, we must now turn to a less pleasing picture, and see him bewailing the death of several of his best friends.

The first of these was Thomas de Caloria, with whom he had studied at Bologna, and always kept up a correspondence. He died at Messina, his native place, on his return from a journey he made to Lombes, to pass some time with James Colonna. It was this journey which prevented his being at Rome at the coronation of Petrarch, who learned this melancholy news by letters from the brothers of Thomas. They wrote to him to beg him to write his epitaph. This was Petrarch's answer :

' We were of the same age, and the same opinions ; we pursued the same studies, had the same dispositions, and aimed at the same end. Never was there a stricter union, or greater similarity. When I learned that I had lost the better part of myself, life became a burthen to me ; I wished to die, but could not. I had a violent fever, which brought my end in view ;



but it was only a glimmering of futurity. I was at the gate of death, and found written thereon, "Return! Thy hour is not yet come." I came back to life with this consolation, that I could not be detained long. I know that Seneca says, it is absurd to desire what it is in our power to obtain; but though I admire the genius of this philosopher, I think often very differently from him; and, above all, on this subject, where his sentiments are ill-founded, and carry no weight.'

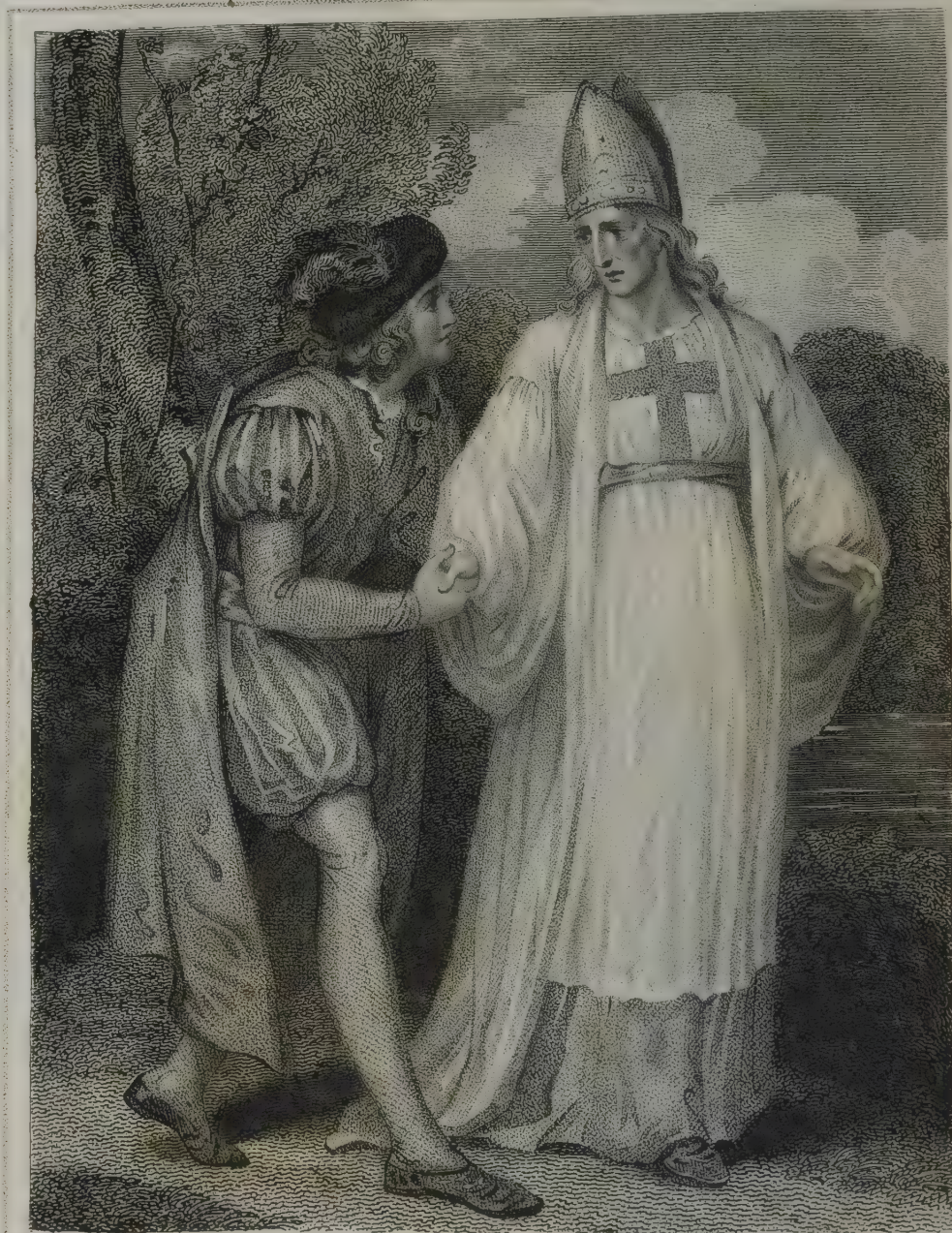
The bishop of Lombes wrote at this time to Petrarch, to compliment him upon his coronation, in the following singular style:

'If all the parts of my body were so many tongues; if all the voices which have ever existed were to cry out together; they would not express the joy I felt when I learned that the young Florentine poet had been crowned with laurel in the capitol.'

This prelate pressed Petrarch in the most earnest manner to come and see him at Lombes, and officiate as canon in his church. Petrarch had promised to go the beginning of the year following; and he looked forward with joy to that time, when he should have finished his Africa, and should lay that and his crown together at the feet of the man whom he







Kirk delin.

Ridley sculp.

*Petrarch's Dream &c.*

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adored. He had even formed a project of settling entirely near this amiable friend, when he received the melancholy news that the bishop was dangerously ill at Lombes.

This information alarmed him exceedingly: he fluctuated between fear and hope. ‘One night in my sleep,’ says Petrarch, ‘I thought I saw the bishop walking alone, and crossing the stream that watered my garden. I ran to him, and asked him a thousand questions at once. “From whence came you? Where are you going so fast? Why are you alone?” The bishop replied with a smile, “Do you recollect the summer you passed with me on the other side the Garonne? The climate and the manners of Gascony displeased you, and you found the storms of the Pyrennees insupportable. I now think as you did. I am weary of it myself. I have bid adieu to this barbarous country, and am returning to Rome.” He had continued to walk on while he spake these words, and was got to the end of the garden. I attempted to join him, and begged that I might at least be permitted the honor of accompanying him. The bishop gently put me back with his hand, and changing his countenance, and the tone of his voice; “No,” said he, “you must not come with me at present.” After having said this,



he looked stedfastly at me; and then it was that I saw on his face all the signs of death. The sudden shock of this sight caused me to cry aloud, and awaked me from my sleep. I marked the day, and related the circumstances to the friends I had at Parma, and wrote an account of it to my other friends in many different places. Five-and-twenty days after this, I received the mournful news that the bishop of Lombes was dead, and found that he died on the very day that I had seen him in vision in my garden. This singular accident,' says he to John Andre, 'gives me no more faith in dreams than Cicero, who, as well as myself, had a dream confirmed by the event.'

How heavy was this loss to Petrarch! How many others likewise were sufferers on this occasion! The house of Colonna, of whom the bishop was the support, the joy, the consolation; the city of Rome, which looked upon him as its guardian, and tutelar angel: the court of Avignon, where he had many relations, admirers, and friends: in fine, his episcopal town, where he was universally loved and respected. He had behaved in this desert place with so much dignity and condescension, that every person of consequence, except himself, was ashamed to see him fixed there. He was

contented with his lot, and inaccessible to ambition: he considered the honors of this world as the precipices of virtue, and shunned them with as much care as others pursue them. The patriarchate of Aquilea becoming vacant at the time he was at Rome, he was named for it by the nobility and the people. But he wrote to his brother the cardinal, that they must not think of him for that place, for he would not accept of it. The jealousy and avarice of the Gascons, who filled the court of Rome, and disturbed the Italians, had at first suspended his elevation; but his virtue and merit rose so high, that he would certainly have been raised to the purple, if death had not stopped him in the midst of his career.

A little time before he died, he wrote to the cardinal his brother, concerning reports which had been spread of his approaching elevation. The cardinal sent this letter to Petrarch, who could not read it without shedding a torrent of tears.

‘ Every line of it,’ says he, ‘ breathes modesty; the love of moderation; freedom from ambition; and contentment with his lot. In it are the principles of the soundest philosophy, expressed in the most noble and exact manner.



What a man! And must such men, who ought to live for ever, die sooner than others!

‘We have lived too long,’ says he to Lelius, who had received the last breath of this amiable prelate. ‘We have lost the best of all masters, the tenderest of all fathers. What shall I do? What will become of me? I am at Parma only a bird of passage. Shall I go to Lombes, where I am a canon? It is an odious climate, a barbarous country, and I have lost the only person that could render that situation agreeable. How can I look upon that tomb where all my hopes lie buried? How shall I ever bring myself to kiss the hands of a proud prelate, a barbarian, instead of those of the amiable master I have lost? Shall I go to Avignon, and resume my place in the court of our cardinal? How mournful will that situation be, now it is deprived of its greatest ornament!’

Lelius had inherited from his ancestors an attachment to the house of the Colonnas, but he went beyond them in this attachment, and had devoted himself particularly to the bishop, whom he attended every where, and could find no consolation for the loss of such a friend.

A rumour was spread, that cardinal Colonna

intended to remove the body of his brother from Lombes to Rome. On this matter Petrarch says to him, 'Divided between a city of which I am a citizen, and a church in which I am a canon, I know not what counsel to give you.' Three years after this the remains of this great prelate were carried to Rome, and received with a great deal of veneration.

In a letter to the cardinal, Petrarch declaims very much against a superstitious custom which reigned at that time, and above all in the court of the pope, and which he wished to banish from the house of the cardinal. In speaking of a man lately dead, they pronounced only the first syllables of his name, and made use of some epithet before them, as unhappy, unfortunate.

'Shew no such weakness!' says he to the cardinal; 'support this loss with courage: you are exposed to public view, you ought to be more observant of your own conduct than another; and as your name, your rank, and your actions, have set you up for an example, become also, in this instance, a model worthy the imitation of all the world.'

No one will suppose that, after the death of the bishop, Petrarch had any difficulty in renouncing his canonry at Lombes. He parted



with it entirely, and was well recompensed by the archdeaconry of Parma, which just then became vacant.

As it was the first dignity of the church at Parma, next to the mitre, it connected him much with the bishop. Hugolin de Rossi had governed this church eighteen years; and, as he was of that illustrious family which had so long disputed the lordship of Parma with the house of Corregio, Petrarch feared this prelate would be displeased to see at the head of his chapter a man whom he believed devoted to his enemies, and who had pleaded their cause against his family in 1335, as has been before observed. But Hugolin, who was full of sweetness and equity, not only did not express the least resentment towards Petrarch, but gave him a very favorable reception the first time he saw him, and afterwards the most flattering distinction. It was remarked, in speaking of that cause, that Petrarch had avoided with great circumspection saying any thing against this prelate, who was present, and whose birth and virtues he respected.

Petrarch's tears were scarcely dried up for the bishop of Lombes, when they were again called forth for another dear friend.

1342. At the beginning of this year death

deprived him of that wise man, who had been his director and his friend, the good father Dennis, whom king Robert had drawn to Naples. This prince conferred upon him, by leave of the pope, the bishopric of Monopoli, which became vacant soon after his arrival at Naples. He did not long enjoy this dignity; he died at Naples the 14th of January, in the palace of king Robert.

‘I would weep,’ says Petrarch, in a letter to king Robert, ‘but shame and grief prevent me. I knew before that there is no security against death. Of this truth we have now a melancholy proof! He has taken from Italy a man over whom he ought to have had no power, and whose name will live for ever. This learned man, who so well understood both nature and the world, must think this life of little moment. He has lost nothing by death; and, though happy on earth, because he possessed your love, he will be much happier in heaven, whither he is translated.

‘It is I who suffer; it is Italy, it is his country, that is deprived of so great an ornament. It is the world whom death has robbed of an abundant source of truth and knowledge.

‘But it is you, oh best of princes! who are



the most deeply affected with this loss. The society of father Dennis was the charm and comfort of your life. Whose conversations were more entertaining, mild, and useful? Whom could you find so worthy to listen to you, or so capable of comprehending the mysteries of heaven, when you vouchsafed to display your eloquence and extensive knowledge? If great princes may be allowed to indulge their tears, you cannot refuse them to father Dennis. Muses! join your tears to mine! and weep with me the loss of a favorite so dear, a favorite who did you so much honor! Let all Parnassus mourn, and resound with your lamentations! Inspire me with some verses to engrave upon his tomb!

EPITAPH ON FATHER DENNIS.

‘ Here lies father Dennis; the flower of poets; the searcher of futurity; the glory of Italy. A faithful friend; mild and amiable in society; his soul and his countenance were always serene; and, notwithstanding the elevation of his mind and the lustre of his eloquence, he was always modest and condescending. Among the ancients he would have been

a rare, among the moderns he was an unequalled, character.'

These accumulated losses made so strong an impression upon Petrarch, that he could not open a letter without apprehension and fear. Had it not been for these distresses, he would have led at Parma a tranquil and agreeable life. This city is finely situated on the Po, in a valley which lies between the Alps and the Apennines, below the cascades of the one, and the thunders and torrents of the other. It is surrounded with a rich and fruitful plain, where, cherished by the influence of the sun and the waters, the vine, the elm, and all sorts of fruits and grain, flourish together.

Petrarch divided his time between his church, where he filled up with honor his office of archdeacon, and his closet, where he principally worked at his *Africa*. He seldom went to make his court to his lords, who nevertheless treated him with great respect. He had not been a year in this city, when the orders of his superiors obliged him to quit this situation, and return to Avignon. It is not clear from whence these orders came, or what could be the foundation of them. It is probable that cardinal Colonna, with whom Petrarch had promised



to pass the winter, summoned him to keep his word.

It appears, however, that he complied much against his will, by the bitter complaints he makes to Barbatus of Sulmone :

‘I am forced,’ says he, ‘to cross the Alps before the sun has melted the snows which cover them. I must return to the banks of the Rhone, and to those infamous places which are the receptacle of every evil. What a destiny! If fortune envies me a grave in my own country, let me be permitted to seek one under the pole! I consent to live and to die in Africa, among its serpents; upon Caucasus, or Atlas; if, while I live, I may be allowed to breathe a pure air, and, after my death, a little corner of the earth, where I may bestow my body: this is all I ask; but this I cannot obtain. Doomed always to wander, and to be a stranger every where, oh, Fortune! Fortune! fix me at last to some spot. I do not covet thy favors; let me enjoy a tranquil poverty; let me pass in this retreat the few days that remain to me. How miserable are we! Nothing is certain in this world. The wheel of fortune is for ever in motion; we tremble on its summit; in the middle we are suspended; and at the bottom

we are trampled upon. I have pleased myself below; yet am agitated as if in the clouds. To no end have I avoided elevations; this is what I have a long time complained of; but my complaints have been in vain.

‘ When we sail upon the ocean, tempests and shipwrecks are to be expected: but to be exposed to hurricanes on the land, to be swallowed up by the waves of a brook, this is monstrous indeed. I am again obliged to quit my country, and those friends who are dear to me. I am ordered to take a safe route; but the enemy occupies every road. I must go through the Tridentum of the Alps, cross the lakes of Germany, and pass the Danube and the Rhine near their sources. Alas! I must obey, and submit to the yoke. Fortune had forgot me, and I passed a year in tranquillity. It is her pleasure now to force me from a sweet repose, and plunge me again into a frightful chaos! How happy are you, my dear Barbatus! Take my advice, and never quit your nest.’

Petrarch set out for Avignon in 1342; and it was a great joy to him when he arrived there, to find his two friends, Lelius and Socrates, who came to live with the cardinal after the death of the bishop of Lombes. The union of these three friends became stronger than ever.



Socrates, in particular, gave himself entirely to Petrarch, and never quitted him even when he went to Vacluse, where few of his other friends had the courage to follow him.

Soon after his return to Avignon, Petrarch was witness to a great event. Benedict XII. had for some years had a fistula in his leg, which obliged him to keep his chamber. At the petition of the cardinals, he held some consistories seated on his bed, according to the custom of that age. The discharge being more than common, the physicians attempted to stop it, and threw it back into the blood, where it made such havoc as to threaten a very speedy death. Petrarch perceiving that Benedict's last moments were coming on, wrote the following letter to the bishop of Cavaillon:

‘ What are you doing, my father? And what think you will be the end of the present tempest? Shall we gain the port, or be swallowed up by the waves? The vessel cannot withstand the billows. The wind is violent; the rowers are without experience; and the pilot, despising the rules of his art, makes too fast towards the land, which is the rock of navigators. He confides too much in a deceitful calm, and steers his course by wandering planets, instead of adhering to the faithful pole.

Full of wine, weighed down by age, overpowered with drowsiness; he staggers, he sleeps, and is falling into the sea. And would to heaven he fell alone: would to God that our heavenly Father, seeing us erring without a pilot, in an agitated sea, would himself conduct the bark which he has purchased with so great a price!

‘Such is the condition we are thrown into by the ignorance of our pilot. What do I say? His indolence, his blindness, his shameful stupidity, and his passion for a vile and stormy country. Ah! why did they take him from his father’s plough, to commit to him a government of which he was so incapable? But he is going to receive the recompense he merits. This man, the jest of all parties, the object of incessant ridicule, will soon become the prey of sea-wolves.

‘What will become of us? We may seek a plank that may save us in our shipwreck. Our consolation is, we can scarcely find such another pilot; if we could, we should be lost for ever. If you ask what is my opinion, I think we ought to come and settle in your country, and thus shelter ourselves from the approaching tempest. Reflect upon these things.’



This pontiff despised Italy, and was therefore detested by Petrarch. Benedict carried this contempt to such a height, that one day some eels being sent him from the lake of Bolsena, of a prodigious size and exquisite flavor, he distributed most of them among the cardinals, reserving for himself but a very small portion. Some days after this, the cardinals going according to custom to attend upon him at dinner, he said to them in a jeering manner, 'Gentlemen, if I had tasted the eels before I sent them, you would not have had so large a share; but I confess I did not believe that Italy produced any thing that was good.' Cardinal Colonna, who was present, reddened with anger, and could not help replying, that he was astonished one who had read so many books as his holiness, should be ignorant that Italy was the mother of every thing that was excellent.

Benedict died the 25th of April, 1342, and was interred at Notre-Dame, where his monument is now to be seen. A contemporary author assures us, that a monk, who had been a brother in the same convent with Benedict, said to him some time before his death, 'You will die soon if you do not amend your life.'

The holy see was vacant only thirteen days.

All the suffrages were united in Pierre Roger, cardinal of Aquileia, who took the name of Clement VI. He was of an ancient family, and had passed through many honors, as the provisor of the Sorbonne, the archbishoprics of Sens and Rouen, and the chancellorship of Paris, having the seals conferred on him by Philip of Valois; after which Benedict XII. made him cardinal in the promotion that took place in 1338. The coronation of this pope was conducted with great pomp, and was performed the 19th of May, in the church of the Dominicans. John, duke of Normandy, eldest son of the king of France, James, duke of Bourbon, Philip, duke of Burgundy, Humbert, dauphin of Viennois, and several other great lords, assisted at the ceremony.

The court of Rome immediately changed its appearance, and there was a magnificence and luxury unknown in the preceding pontificates. Clement VI. was condescending, frank, noble, and generous. He had the taste and manners of a nobleman who had always lived in the courts of princes. No sovereign of his time appeared with more éclat, or diffused his favors with more grace or liberality. Nothing equalled the sumptuousness of his furniture, the delicacies of his table, or the splendor of



his court, which was filled with lords and gentlemen of ancient nobility. Accustomed to live among ladies, whose society amused him, he did not think the papacy obliged him to alter his manner of life. They continued to visit him as usual. In truth, this did not add to the decorum of his court, but it rendered it very agreeable and brilliant.

This pope had great qualities, but an excessive luxury of character, which caused him to be spoken of by many authors with great bitterness. His reputation for generosity and benevolence, together with a bull of invitation that he published, drew to Avignon this year more than a hundred thousand scholars, who all returned with some favor shewn them. It would be hard to give credit to this, if we did not recollect that his predecessor left a great number of benefices vacant, because, as he said, he found no person worthy to fill them. Clement VI. thought and acted in a very different manner. His hands were ever open; and his favorite maxim was, 'That no one should depart unsatisfied from the palace of a prince.'

As soon as they were informed at Rome of the election of Clement, they sent a solemn embassy to make him three principal requests.

The first, that he would vouchsafe to accept the office of senator; as disputes on this head had often made that city a prey to civil wars. The second, that he would hasten the re-establishment of the holy see at Rome. And the third, that he would be pleased to reduce to fifty years the indulgence which pope Boniface VIII. had granted to the church, and fixed at an hundred years; and that the reason for this their prayer was, that all the faithful might partake of it, the time appointed by Boniface exceeding the ordinary term of life.

After two months consideration the pope returned this answer: That, as to the first, it belonged to him as sovereign of Rome; that he would however accept the municipal government in his right as cardinal, without derogating from his sovereignty: that, as to the second request, no one could be more desirous than himself of the return of the holy see to Rome; but he could not fix the time till the affairs of France and England were in a more tranquil state: and that with respect to the jubilee, he granted with pleasure the reduction they asked, and fixed his indulgence to return every fifty years.

Petrarch, who had obtained the dignity of Roman citizen by letters patent at his corona-



tion, was one of the ambassadors sent from Rome to pope Clement; he was joined with Nicholas Gabrini, called Rienzi, and appointed to make an oration before the pope. In this speech he uses his favorite figure when speaking of Rome; he describes an old woman, bowing down with grief and misfortune, who comes to throw herself at the feet of her husband. 'You desired to see me,' says she, 'when I was in bondage to another; and I fear not being as dear to you now I am again become yours. You judge not like the vulgar, who desire ardently what they have not, and are easily disgusted with what they have.'

The reward of this oration, which was a long one, and very dry, was the priory of St. Nicholas, in the diocese of Pisa, which the pope gave to Petrarch the sixth of October, 1342.

The pope granted two small favors this year to two of Laura's children. Her daughter Ermessenda was received into the convent of St. Laurence, where she professed herself some time after; and Audibert, her son, was appointed to the canonry of Notre-Dame de Dons. These children were about twelve or thirteen years of age.

We are now come to Rienzi, Petrarch's

colleague, who was soon after this very singularly distinguished in the revolutions of Rome. His origin and character were as follows. His father kept a public-house, and his mother was a washerwoman. But he made up for the lowness of his birth by the elevation of his wit and understanding; his imagination was lively and brilliant; he had a prodigious memory, and a natural eloquence which drew after him the whole world. His parents, though so meanly situated, spared nothing in the course of his education. When the first studies of grammar and rhetoric had polished his mind, and improved his natural eloquence, he applied himself to the study of the Roman history, and the search into its antiquities, to which he joined a great knowledge of the civil law, and the rights of the people. The Commentaries of Cæsar were much read, and much esteemed by him.

Rienzi's enthusiasm for Rome united him firmly with Petrarch, and could be the only foundation of a connection between men of such different characters. He succeeded also with Clement, who admired his eloquence, and was never weary of his conversation. He had likewise at first the good graces of cardinal Co-



lonna, probably through the favor of Petrarch, but which he afterwards lost by inveighing bitterly against some great lords in Rome. The pope conferred upon Rienzi the place of notary at Rome, which was a very lucrative post. These honors paved the way for the extraordinary situation in which we shall soon behold him.

Clement VI. had a fine natural understanding, which he had enriched and improved by study. Petrarch says, he forgot nothing that he read, and if he wished to do it, he had it not in his power.

He had gained, in his conversation with the female sex, and in the courts of princes, a softness and politeness of manner which endeared him to every one. When he reserved to himself the nomination of the greater prelacies, to satisfy the desire he had of bestowing favors, it was represented to him, that such reserves would produce great inconveniences, and that his predecessors had not dared to make them. He replied, 'My predecessors knew not what it was to be popes.'

It was in the pontificate of this pope that the city of Avignon, where debauchery had long reigned, came at last to the greatest excess of luxury and dissoluteness. The accounts

which Petrarch gives of the licentiousness and neglect of all decency in this city, are fully confirmed by other writers.

On the return of Petrarch to Avignon, Laura behaved to him in a kinder manner. Perhaps a long absence made her feel more sensibly that she was not indifferent to him; perhaps, too, his reputation made some impression on her mind. However this was, the favor of the pope, and the kindness of Laura, rendered Avignon more agreeable than usual to Petrarch. He passed the greatest part of this year there, and went to Vaucluse but seldom, and for a short time; and when he was in that solitude, he owns that his soul was always at Avignon with Laura.

Petrarch was one day seated in a public place to which he knew Laura would come, and meditating on his usual subject, with his eyes fixed on the ground, when she appeared suddenly before him. As soon as he perceived her, he rose, and making her a low bow, was going to speak. She cast upon him a kind look, returned him the same salutation, and passed along, saying something he did not perfectly hear. These obliging manners filled Petrarch with extreme joy.

At this time Petrarch made a connection



with Sennucio Delbene, a Florentine of noble birth, and who favored the party of the Ghibelins. There is an anecdote relating to him which the people of Florence speak of with indignation. Charles of Valois being sent to Florence by pope Boniface VIII. on public affairs, was much delighted with the diversion of hawking. Sennucio had a country house near the city, where Charles often went to refresh himself on these occasions. Sennucio accommodated him in the best manner he could, and as suited a gentleman of his rank. This hospitality did not prevent the prince from imprisoning him, because he was of the party opposite to that he favored, and condemning him to pay a fine of four thousand livres: his estate also was confiscated. But by the favor of John XXII. Sennucio was re-established in all his rights in the year 1326. He was attached to the Colonnas, and above all to cardinal John Colonna, which gave rise to the friendship between him and Petrarch.

Sennucio was fond of the arts. He had a tender heart, and was attached to the fair sex. He was also a poet; but his lyre was strung to lighter measures, not sad and plaintive, like that of Petrarch.

I do not know how it was that Sennucio was admitted to the house of Laura, but it appears that he saw her often, and that Petrarch often conversed with him on the subject of his love.

The praises Petrarch had bestowed on Laura rendered her celebrated every where. All who came to Avignon had a strong desire to see her. But, though she was not yet thirty years of age, she was somewhat altered. Whether this was owing to her having had many children, to illness, or domestic chagrins, she had no longer her former clear and brilliant complexion. Petrarch also, by a kind of sympathy, lost that beautiful complexion which had been so universally admired. In a letter written to a friend, whom he had not seen for some time, he says, 'I am not what I was; the perpetual discord between my soul and my body has changed me so much that you would hardly know me again.'

This year, 1342, died at Avignon a lady who was greatly beloved by Gerard, the brother of Petrarch.

'The object,' says Petrarch to him, 'of your tender love has left us to enjoy celestial glory. I hope it at least, and I believe it! The sweetness of her manners, and the virtues of her life,



will not fail to insure her this felicity. Take back, therefore, for it is high time, the two keys of thy heart. Thus relieved from anxiety, and thy path clear before thee, follow this beloved object in the surest road. Nothing ought now to retard thy progress. Thou resemblest a pilgrim, who wants only a staff to take a long journey. You see, my dear brother, we hasten fast toward death : when, in the awful passage, our souls are released from mortal ties, they will take their flight with more freedom and ease.

Gerard, touched in the most sensible manner with this loss, followed the advice of his brother, and determined to employ himself wholly for the future, in the great work of his salvation: he quitted the world, and placed himself in the monastery of the Carthusians, which he went to visit when at St. Baume with Petrarch, in 1339. The heavenly life which these monks led in that awful solitude, had made an impression upon him which had never been effaced.

The origin of the order of the Carthusians is thus related by Petrarch. Two brothers, from Genoa, set out on a trading voyage ; the one sailed toward the east, the other toward the west. After a number of years, one of

them arriving at Genoa, being informed his brother was at Marfeilles, wrote to him, to desire his return to Genoa; but receiving no answer, he went to Marfeilles, and, finding his brother there, he asked him, why he did not come to Genoa? His brother replied, 'I am weary of navigation and trade: I will no longer trust my life to the mercy of the winds; do as you please; my resolution is fixed. I have found a port on the borders of Paradise, where I will rest, and wait in tranquillity the moment of my death.'

The other, who did not comprehend this language, asked him to explain himself: he returned no answer, but took him to Montrieu, into a deep valley, in the middle of a wood, and pointed to a house he had there just built. Struck with the awfulness of the surrounding scene, the other Genoese felt a sudden compunction, and determined immediately to erect a building like that of his brother, on a neighbouring hill. They bade adieu to the world, and founded with their estates and houses, the new order of the Carthusians; an order famous for its piety and austerity of manners: and in this solitude they consecrated the remainder of their days to God. This monastery of Montrieu is situated between Aix and Toulon,



in the middle of the woods, and surrounded with mountains, from whence issue several rivers. Hence the name of Montrieu.

Though Petrarch loved his brother with tenderness, he was not sorry for this change. Gerard was fond of pleasure, and of an unsteady temper; he knew not how to moderate any of his inclinations; and this gave Petrarch a great deal of trouble and uneasiness, especially in a city like Avignon. 'I acknowledge,' says Petrarch, 'the hand of God in this conversion. None but himself could work so great a change.' Petrarch had conceived a very high idea of the Carthusians. 'This order does not,' says he, 'resemble others: none enter into it by force or seduction.' Gerard was no sooner fixed in this monastery, than he wrote to his brother, to induce him to take the same resolution. Petrarch, filled with piety and remorse, was staggered; but he did not comply. Pope Clement VI. gave Gerard an absolution when in the article of death.

The bishop of Rhodes, whose name was Bernard Albi, and who had been appointed cardinal after the exaltation of Clement, came at this time to Avignon, and was much delighted with the conversation of Petrarch. After his return to Italy, he sent him a letter full of

sublime questions on the most abstracted subjects of philosophy. Petrarch replies thus :

‘ Your questions are an ample proof of your great penetration. To question and to doubt with judgment, is a great part of our knowledge. The manner in which you confess your ignorance consoles me for my own ; and, was not this the case, my occupations, the excessive heats, and the tumult of this crowded city, leave me little time for writing.

‘ You would have me measure the heavens, the earth, and the seas. I, who know not of what kind of clay my own body is formed, or the nature of the soul which is confined in it as in a prison, shall I dive into the systems of Ptolemy, or decypher the characters which the Sicilian geometrician drew on the unfortunate soil ? Alas ! death pursues me with eager steps ; and all my aim is to steal a few moments from his grasp. I shall, therefore, only say, in answer to your questions, that there are seven planets, and that the sun holds the first rank : his rays re-animate the world : he begins his course in the east ; and when he sets, a cold shade is spread over the earth. The fixed stars make their revolutions also by a motion not visible to us. It is disputed whether the sun is placed in the centre of the world ; but



would it not be better to seek this centre where virtue dwells? Men form calculations how much larger it is than the earth; and they neglect to examine how much more noble the soul is than the body.

‘The moon shines with the light it borrows from the sun; its motions are periodical. Mercury is an inconstant planet, and its influences are various: we know all this, but we neglect to inquire whether prosperity is a good or evil; by whom, and in what cases, death is to be desired or feared. Your courier is in haste; and I would rather send him back with nothing, than give him many lines of which I should be ashamed. I cannot explain to you my astonishment when I saw that deluge of verses which your letter poured in upon me. I undertook to count them, but in vain. What a pity that Virgil possessed not this happy faculty! He would not have passed his whole life in composing a poem which at last he left imperfect. Your questions resemble the enigma of the Sphinx; and you must seek another Oedipus to answer them.’

1343. Borlaam, the Greek monk, of whom mention has been already made, came this year to Avignon. He had been much chagrined by a decision given against him by the patriarch

of Constantinople, in a dispute he had held with the monks of Mount Athos. These monks maintained that the light which appeared on mount Tabor, at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, was uncreated; and that it was God himself. The Greeks made a serious affair of this fanciful opinion; and were contending for the truth of it with vehemence while the Turks were at their gates, and had formed, as it were, a barrier round Constantinople of the cities they had taken in Asia.

Petrarch was glad to see his Greek master again: and as Borlaam desired an establishment in Italy, Petrarch, by his solicitations and his credit, procured him the bishopric of Geraci, which being a suffragan, or subsidiary bishopric, depending on Rheggio, the revenue was small; but it suited Borlaam, because it settled him at the close of life in his native country, where he died ten years after, in 1353.

At the end of January, 1343, there arrived an extraordinary courier at Avignon, who brought the melancholy news of the death of Robert, king of Naples. This caused a general consternation in that city, and throughout all Provence. This prince was sixty years old, when, without terror, he saw his flesh waste away, his



body decaying, and death taking possession of his whole fabric. One thing alone troubled his last moments; this was the state in which he must leave his family and his kingdom. Robert had had two children by his queen. The eldest died young; and the second, named Charles, duke of Calabria, left only two daughters, Joan and Mary.

Charobert, king of Hungary, who had some pretensions to the kingdom of Naples, as the heir of Charles Martel, Robert's eldest brother, had two sons. Pope John XXII. who had decided in favor of Robert, proposed a double marriage between these royal houses: the princess Joan, who was the eldest, with Andrew, the second son; and the eldest son, Lewis, with Mary, the second daughter. These marriages were celebrated with astonishing magnificence in 1333. Andrew was six and Joan nine years old; and it was thought their being brought up together would cement this union: but, as it might rather have been expected, it happened otherwise. The antipathy that Joan shewed for Andrew was soon remarked; the difference of their educations alone would have produced this effect.

The Neapolitans were polite, voluptuous, gallant, and magnificent. The Hungarians, on

the contrary, were vulgar, churlish, and enemies to magnificence and pleasure; and were looked upon at Naples as barbarians, who could scarcely be treated with sufficient contempt. Add to this, Andrew and his courtiers exaggerated in a haughty manner their rights to the kingdom of Naples; while at the court of Joan they ridiculed their pride, and maintained that Andrew could only reign as husband of his queen. Robert saw with grief these contests; and the pre-sentiments they raised in his heart clouded his last moments, which would otherwise have been the calm evening of a bright day.

Perceiving that he drew near his end, he assembled his nobles, and dictated his will in their presence. By this will, he made Joan, his grand-daughter, his heir; and her sister Mary was to succeed her. Saiche of Arragon, the second wife of Robert, by whom he had no children, was a woman of capacity and virtue, to whom he would have confided the regency, and the education of his grand-daughters, had she not formed a resolution, on his death, to finish her days in a monastery. She had always so strong an inclination for the cloister, that in 1317 she attempted to set aside her marriage, to throw herself into a convent. But



pope John XXII. to whom she applied, told her this intention was a snare of the devil. Robert named her however, at the head of a council for the administration, till the princesses were twenty-five years old; and Philip de Cabaffole was one of this council.

After this, Robert desired they would bring to him the two young persons he had named for his successors. He addressed himself to them with the greatest dignity and tenderness; discovered to them the dangers which threatened them; and informed them in what manner they ought to conduct themselves towards their enemies, their friends, and their subjects. At a moment when other men can scarcely support themselves, this great king seemed wholly interested in the good of his family; and the wisdom, strength, and presence of mind, he shewed on this occasion, surprised and overwhelmed with grief those who were present. Observing those who stood round his bed melted into tears, he reproached them for it in a gentle manner. 'What is the reason of your grief?' said he. 'My death has nothing in it mournful or unhappy; on the contrary, it is greatly for my advantage. I leave a frail throne for an everlasting kingdom. Have I not lived long enough? I have almost attained

the period that Nature herself seems to have fixed to the life of man. Instead of afflicting yourselves, my children, rejoice with me in my felicity.'

After having said this, he discoursed to them upon death with so much eloquence and philosophy, he painted it in such soft and agreeable colours, that those who were present confessed it no longer appeared so terrible an event; and that the end of a dying sage, like Robert, was preferable to the school of the greatest philosopher. After having settled all his affairs with the same calm deliberation as if he was just going to set out for the country, he addressed himself to God, and delivered up his soul into the hands of its Maker, without one sigh or tear, or shewing the least mark of weakness on account of its separation from his body. 'He died,' says Petrarch, 'as he lived, acting and speaking like himself.' He chose to die in the habit of the third order of St. Francis, an act of zeal at that time in fashion.

Petrarch was at Avignon when he received the news of king Robert's death. He set out immediately for Vacluse, to lament in silence and solitude so irreparable a loss. Some time after he writes thus to Barbatus of Sulmone:

'Alas! nothing can equal my loss! Who



now shall be my adviser, my protector, my support? To whom shall I devote my genius and my studies? Who shall revive my hopes, and draw my soul out of its lethargy? I had two guides, two protectors; and death has deprived me of both in the course of one year. For my first and dearest friend, I shed the tears of affection on the bosom of Lelius. For the second, I weep with you, and shall for ever weep. I, who have been accustomed to console others, know not how to console myself. I send you these few lines from that retreat where my soul seeks refuge in all its troubles.'

Petrarch, some time after this, at the desire of a Neapolitan nobleman, made the following epitaph on king Robert:

'Here lies the body of king Robert; his soul is in heaven. He was the glory of kings; the honor of his age; the chief of warriors; and the best of men. Skilful in the art of war, he loved peace. If he had lived longer, Jerusalem and Sicily, under his standard, would have shaken off the yoke of the Barbarians, and driven out the tyrants. These two kingdoms have lost their hope in losing their king. His genius equalled his valor: he unravelled the holy mysteries; he read the events of hea-

ven; he understood the virtues of plants; all nature was open before him. The Muses and the Arts mourn their protector. Nothing was kinder than his manners: his heart was the temple of Patience. All the virtues lie buried in his tomb. No one can praise him as he deserves: but Fame shall make him immortal.'

Petrarch had reason to regret a prince who had conferred upon him so many favors, and who had so great a relish for his works, that, stealing sometimes from his serious occupations, he passed many hours of the night in reading them, without thinking either of food or sleep.

Petrarch, after lamenting this friend many days in the silence and gloom of his retreat, came back to Avignon, where he passed a great part of the winter, making only now and then short visits to Vaucluse.

1344. Petrarch being at Avignon some time after this, met with Laura at a public assembly. Her dress was magnificent; but in particular she had silk gloves, brocaded with gold; a rare ornament at that time, when silk was so scarce in Languedoc, and in Provence, that the senechal of Beaucaue, two years after this, sent twelve pounds to queen



Joan of Burgundy, which cost him seventy-six French livres a pound. Laura happened to drop one of these gloves. Petrarch, whose eyes were ever bent towards her, immediately picked it up. Laura perceiving it in his hands, took it from him instantly; and, though Petrarch had the strongest desire to retain this precious ornament, he had not the power. If the nobility of Laura had not been proved by the contract of her marriage, it would have been by these embroidered gloves; for in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, none but persons of quality in France were allowed to wear silk, gold, furs, pearls, and precious jewels. This was observed at Avignon; and none of the relations of the pope, the wives and daughters of the marshals, barons, viguiers, and the ladies of noble birth in this city, were exempted from this sumptuary law. Avignon, however, by its commerce with strangers, had long lost the simplicity of its manners, which till then it had been famous for; their extravagance increased with their wealth; and the wives of citizens aimed as much as possible to vie with the ladies of noble rank in their luxury and expence.

Under the Pontificate of Clement VI. profusion and debauchery were carried to the ut-

most height at Avignon. The generosity of this pontiff was unbounded; and he had the strongest attachment to the fair sex, who had free access at all hours to his palace. At the head of those ladies who formed a court in the palace of Clement, was the viscountess of Turenne. As she acted a considerable part in the pontificate of Clement, and was the particular object of Petrarch's aversion, a short description of her may not be disagreeable.

The name of this lady was Cicily. She was the daughter of the count de Commenges, who had espoused the daughter and heiress of Raymond, viscount of Turenne. She married the son of Alphonso IV. king of Arragon, and became viscountess of Turenne by the death of her brother, in the year 1340. She was a woman of infinite cunning, and proud and imperious to excess. It was easy for such a character to influence the mind of Clement, who was a man of the most gentle temper, and the easiest to govern. The empire she obtained over him, and the authority with which she disposed of every thing in his court, have caused many to suspect that she was his mistress. It is certain she made herself very agreeable to him as a companion, accumulated a great deal of wealth, and dishonored herself



by the avidity with which she received money from all hands without distinction.

It is not surprising that, under the government of a woman who thought of nothing but amassing wealth, and in a court filled with young persons of both sexes who held the first places there, and had no curb to their desires, debauchery should wholly prevail, and become universal. Petrarch draws two pictures of this terrible licentiousness. In his letters called the *Mysteries*, one of these descriptions is as follows:

‘ All that they say of Assyrian and Egyptian Babylon, of the four Labyrinths, of the Avernian and Tartarian lakes, are nothing in comparison with this hell. We have here a Nimrod powerful on the earth, and a mighty hunter before the Lord, who attempts to scale heaven with raising his superb towers; a Semiramis with her quiver; a Cambyfes more extravagant than the Cambyfes of old. You may here behold the inflexible Minos; Rhodomanthus; the greedy Cerberus; Pasiphae, and the Minotaur. All that is vile and execrable is assembled in this place. There is no clue to lead you out of this labyrinth, neither that of Dedalus nor Ariadne: the only means of escaping is by the influence of gold. Gold

pacifies the most savage monsters, softens the hardest hearts, pierces through the flinty rock, and opens every door, even that of heaven : for, to say all in one word, even Jesus Christ is here bought with gold.

‘ In this place reign the successors of poor fishermen, who have forgot their origin. They march covered with gold and purple, proud of the spoils of princes and of the people. Instead of those little boats in which they gained their living on the lake of Gennefaret, they inhabit superb palaces. They have likewise their parchments, to which are hung pieces of lead ; and these they use as nets to catch the innocent and unwary, whom they fleece and burn to satisfy their gluttony.

‘ To the most simple repasts have succeeded the most sumptuous feasts ; and where the apostles went on foot covered only with sandals, are now seen insolent satrapes mounted on horses ornamented with gold, and champing golden bits. They appear like the kings of Persia, or the Parthian princes, to whom all must pay adoration.

‘ Poor old fishermen ! For whom have you laboured ? For whom have you cultivated the field of the Lord ? For whom have you shed so much of your blood ? Neither piety, cha-



rity, nor truth, is here. God is despised, the laws trampled upon, and wickedness is esteemed wisdom. Oh times! Oh manners!

Petrarch did not satirize the vices of others alone; he composed some reflections at this time which unfold his own character, and the failings to which it was subject. These reflections are put in the form of dialogues, in imitation of the Confessions of St. Augustin.

Augustin was Petrarch's favorite saint. 'When I read his Confessions,' says Petrarch, 'I think I read my own, for I find in them the history of my life. At night, when my soul is freed from care, I lay myself down in bed as in a tomb; and summon my heart before me. Its restlessness and distraction, its fear of death, its hatred of vice, and yet unequal progress in virtue and purity; from whence come all these things?

'They arise,' replies Augustin, 'from your light and careless disposition. You perceive your errors, but you do not seek a better path to walk in: you behold your peril, but take no pains to avoid it.

'How absurd is that vanity of mind produced by your wit, knowledge, eloquence, and beauty! What is there in these things on which to build your pride? How many times

has your wit failed you? In the arts, how much more skilful than you are the most vulgar of mankind, and the smallest animals in the creation? Compare your knowledge with your ignorance, and it will appear like a small brook by the side of the ocean. Your eloquence, what is it? A wind, a puff, an empty noise! Did you feel in the midst of the loudest praises that you wanted the greatest of all, the applause of your own mind? What folly to neglect the most important things in life, to occupy yourself in arranging syllables! Under this restraint, how many objects are there in nature to which you cannot do justice? How many sentiments of philosophy you are not able to express, because you are tied down to measures, and fail in the number of your words! The Greeks and the Latins, have they not mutually reproached each other for this poverty of language?

As to your body, your health, your complexion, your features, can any thing be more frail, or less to be depended on? The smallest accident, the sting of a gnat, a breath of corrupted air, will cause them to wither and decay. Beauty is a flower which often fades before noon: and was not this the case, only represent to yourself how that body will appear



a few years hence, when committed to the silent grave.

‘As to your avarice: while you lived in your solitude, content with a plain garb, the fruits of your trees, and the herbs of your garden, you wanted nothing, and passed a sweet and tranquil life. Now example has altered your taste, and you have the disturbed air of those who are always seeking after what they can never obtain. It is commendable to be active in procuring a comfortable livelihood, but bounds should be fixed to our desires. What are yours?’ ‘I ask nothing superfluous,’ replied Petrarch, astonished that avarice should be laid to his charge; but I would want for nothing. I have no ambition to command, but I would not chuse to obey.’ ‘This,’ says St. Augustin, ‘is the object of the greatest kings, but they have failed in accomplishing it; and those who command whole nations have themselves been forced to obey. Virtue alone can procure that independence which is the end of human wishes.’

‘As to your ambition.’—‘How!’ interrupted Petrarch: ‘to flee courts and cities, to bury oneself among rocks and woods, to combat vulgar opinions, to hate and despise honors, to laugh at those who seek, and all their me-

thods of obtaining them, is this to be ambitious?' 'You are not, I will grant,' replied St. Augustin, 'born ambitious, and nature is not to be forced: but examine your own heart. It is not honors that you hate, but the steps necessary in this age to obtain them. Your route to them is more secret, but has the same end. You must own that this is the real aim of all your studies. The man who sets out on a journey to Rome, but turns back intimidated by the length of the way, it is not Rome that displeases him, but the road that leads to it.

'Envy, gluttony, and wrath,' continued St. Augustin, 'I cannot seriously reproach you with; but you cannot vindicate yourself from the charge of incontinence: and when you have prayed to be delivered from every licentious passion, you have prayed, as too many do, in this manner: "Lord, make me chaste, but not too soon. Wait a little, I beseech thee, till my youth is passed, and the season of pleasure is over. The time will come when I shall have no inclination to vice, and when satiety and disgust will prevent all danger of a relapse." To ask in such a manner, is, indeed, to ask in vain.'

St. Augustin next speaks of that unsettled



and discordant humour to which Petrarch was subject, and which delights to dwell on the dark side, and is always disturbing and tormenting itself. 'Men are lost to peace,' continues he, 'because they know not the difficulties which attend the situations of others, or feel the advantages of their own. Hence arise the complaints of the whole world.' 'I know well,' replied Petrarch, 'that in elevated stations we in vain seek for peace and tranquillity of soul. I am satisfied with my fortune; but I am obliged to live for others, and comply with their humours: this dependence is my misery.

'And who then,' said St. Augustin, 'in this world, lives only for himself? Even Cæsar, after he had subdued the universe, did not he live for others? With all his art, he could not satisfy the desires, or over-rule the power, of those who conspired against him. Nothing but wisdom can insure an independence like this.'

Petrarch next complains to St. Augustin of the life he leads at Avignon. 'I am fatigued,' says he, 'beyond all expression, with this noisy dirty city; it is the gulph of all nastiness and vice; a collection of narrow, ill-built streets, where one cannot take a single step without

meeting with filthy pigs, barking dogs; chariots which stun one with the rattling of their wheels; sets of horses in caparison, which block up the way; disfigured beggars, terrible to look at; strange faces from all the countries upon earth; insolent nobles, drunk with pleasure and debauch; and an unruly populace, always quarrelling and fighting.' To this the faint answers, 'If the tumult of your soul would subside, you would no longer complain of these outward noises, which affect only the senses. When the mind is calm, the confusion of objects around us is no more to our ear than the murmurs of a running stream. In this happy state of soul, neither the clouds which fly around her, nor even the thunder that rolls over her head, is able to disturb her serenity. Safe in the port, she beholds, but feels not, the shipwreck.

'But I have yet only attacked the disorders you are willing to confess; more delicate and deeper wounds lie behind. When I consider your extreme sensibility, I dare hardly attempt to probe them. Petrarch! you are bound with two golden chains; and your greatest unhappiness is, you are so dazzled by the lustre of them both, that you do not perceive your fetters. These chains are love and glory; these are your



treasures, your delights. Let us examine this matter, and first treat of love. Do you not allow that it is a great folly ?

‘The object of our love,’ replied Petrarch, ‘must decide this. Love is the most noble or the most despicable of all the passions : misery, if the object is unamiable : but to be attached to a virtuous woman, who deserves both love and respect, this appears to me a great felicity. If you think otherwise, I am sorry for it. Every one has his own opinion. If this is an error, it is dear to me, and I should be sorry to be deprived of it. You know not the object of this love !’

‘Indeed I do,’ replied St. Augustin. ‘A mortal, a woman is the cause. I know you have passed a great part of your life in admiring and adoring her. A folly so long persisted in astonishes me.’

‘I beseech you,’ returned Petrarch, ‘no invectives. Thais and Livia were women ; but what a difference between them and the person of whom you speak ! Know that her manners are a perfect model of the purest virtue. Little attracted by the pleasures of the world, she sighs after heaven as her only reward.’

‘What a madness !’ returned the faint. ‘You have nourished this flame in your heart sixteen

years. The war of Hannibal in Italy was not so long, nor the flames he kindled more violent than yours. He was driven out at last; but who shall drive away that Hannibal who lays waste your soul?

‘Blind as you are, you love your disease, and you feed it. But listen to me: When death shall extinguish those eyes which delight you now, when you shall behold that beautiful face disfigured and pale, and those perfect limbs motionless and livid, then will you blush for having attached an immortal soul to a decayed and perishable body.’

‘God preserve me,’ resumed Petrarch, ‘from beholding so terrible a disaster; it would be reversing the order of nature. I came first into the world, and it would be unjust I should go out of it the last.’ ‘It is not, however,’ said St. Augustin, ‘an impossible event, in as much as this beautiful person, which is the object of your love, and which is worn out by frequent confinements, has already lost much of its strength and brilliancy.’

‘Learn,’ replied Petrarch, ‘that it is not the person of Laura I adore, but that soul so superior to all others. Her conduct and her manners are an image of the life the blessed lead in heaven. If I should ever lose her, (the



very idea makes me tremble!) I would say, what Lelius, the wisest of the Romans, said on the death of Scipio, "I loved her virtue, and that shall ever live."

'It is not easy,' returned the faint, 'to force you out of your entrenchment: for a moment I will therefore allow that this woman for whom you languish is a saint, a goddess; the goddess of virtue herself, if you will have it so. You are then the more culpable, if your inclinations toward her are not pure and honest.' 'I take Heaven to witness,' replied Petrarch, 'that there was never any thing dishonest in my affections for Laura, never any thing reprehensible in them, but their excess. I wish all the world could see my love with as much clearness as they can her face. It resembles it: It is like that face, pure and without spot. I am going to say a thing that will perhaps astonish you.'

'It is to Laura I owe what I am. Never should I have obtained my present reputation and glory, if the sentiments with which she inspired me, had not raised those seeds of virtue which nature had planted in my soul. She drew me out of those snares and precipices into which the ardour of youth had plunged me. In fine, she pointed out my road to heaven,

and served me as a guide to pursue it. The effect of love is to transform the lover, and to assimilate him to the object beloved. What then more virtuous, more perfect, than Laura? In a city where no one is respected, where no character is held sacred, has calumny dared to assault her? Have they found any thing reprehensible, I say, not only in her actions, but even in her words, in her countenance, or in her gestures? Those bad mouths which poison all, have they dared to taint her life with their pestiferous breath? No; they could not even forbear respecting and admiring it. Inflamed with the desire of enjoying, like her, a great reputation, I have forced through all the obstacles that opposed it. In the flower of my age, I loved her alone; I wished to please her alone. You know all that I have done, and all that I have suffered, to accomplish this end. To her I have sacrificed those pleasures for which I felt the greatest inclination, and you would have me forget and renounce her. No, nothing can ever determine me to such a sacrifice: it is to no purpose for you to attempt it.' 'How many errors!' said the saint, 'how many illusions! You say you owe to Laura what you are; that she has caused you to quit the world,



and has elevated you to the contemplation of celestial things. But the truth is this: full of confidence, and a good opinion of yourself, entirely occupied with one person in whom your whole soul is absorbed, you despise the rest of the world, and the world, in return, despises you. It is true she has drawn you out of some vices; but she has also prevented the growth of many virtues. In tears and complaints you have spent that time which should have been devoted to God. The best effect of this affection is, perhaps, to have rendered you eager after glory: We shall presently examine how much you are indebted to her on this account. As to every thing else, I venture to declare that she has been your destruction, in nourishing a passion she ought to have suppressed. She has filled you with the love of the creature rather than the Creator; and this is the death of the soul.

‘ You say she has raised you to the love of God. It may be so. But in this you have inverted the order of nature. The Creator is to be first loved for his own sake, for his infinite goodness and perfection; and then the creature as his work, and in proportion to its resemblance to him. You have done the contrary. You

have loved God as a good artificer, who has made what you thought the finest object in the world.'

'I take heaven to witness,' again replied Petrarch, 'of what I before advanced, that it is the soul of Laura, and not her person, that I love. Of this I can give you the most incontestible proof. The older she grows, the more does my affection for her increase. Even in her spring her charms began to fade; but the beauties of her mind, and my passion, increased together.'

'If that soul,' resumed St. Augustin, 'had inhabited a vile and ugly body, would you have loved it then?'

'The body,' said Petrarch, 'is the image and the mirror of the soul. If the beauty of the soul could be immediately perceived without the interposition of the body, I should love a beautiful soul, though placed in a disfigured person.'

'If,' replied St. Augustin, 'you love what falls under your senses only, it is still the body which you love. I do not deny that it was the beauty of the soul which nourished and kept up your passion, but it did not give birth to it. You loved the body with the soul, and the heat of youth led you to inclinations even



for Laura, which her virtue alone subdued. Did she not herself tell you, in one of those excesses, "I am not, Petrarch, the person you take me for?" In your commendations of Laura you have often condemned yourself.'

'I will with joy acknowledge,' returned Petrarch, 'her virtue and my own folly; but if my desires have ever passed the bounds which honor prescribes, it is no longer so; those limits are now sacred. With respect to Laura, let me ever do her this justice: I never saw her virtue stagger in the most interesting moments of our connection; and in the gayest hours of her life, her conduct was always uniform, always pure. How admirable is a constancy, a resolution, so superior to the generality of her sex!'

'You cannot deny,' said the faint, 'and have, indeed, confessed, that this love of yours has made you unhappy, and was near drawing on you a fatal crime. This admirable woman was the cause of all this: and ought she not rather to have suppressed than encouraged an inclination so fatal to your peace? She ought to have known and impressed this truth upon you; that, of all the passions to which human nature is subject, love is the most to be feared. It makes us forget ourselves, and it

leads us to forget our God. Every thing serves to nourish and increase it ; and those wretched mortals whom it holds in bondage, carry a fire within them, which will finally consume both soul and body. It is unnecessary to say more : those who have experienced this passion, will feel I speak truth ; those who have never known it, will give me no credit. But you are not one of these.'

'Alas !' returned Petrarch, 'I am not able to answer you, and I must give myself up to despair !'

'No,' said the faint ; 'before you do this, you must make every effort. Consult the best poets and philosophers. Cicero advises to change the object of love, or divide it ; like a king of Persia, who, to weaken the current of the Ganges, cut this river into several streams. But I would not have you take this method. It is better to die an honest death than to live an infamous life ; to be devoted to one honorable than many disgraceful objects. You have tried absence, but it was liberty and curiosity that were your chief motives. These sent you to the north and the south, and to the extremities of the ocean ; these were the foundation of your retreat at Vacluse. But travelling does more harm than good to those who



carry their diseases along with them ; and one might apply to you, in this situation, the answer of Socrates to a young man who complained of the little use he had derived from his travels : “ That is,” said Socrates, “ because you travelled with yourself. For those who would travel with success, must have the mind rightly prepared ; and, without this preparation, in vain will be its course, though extended from pole to pole.” As Horace says, it will change its climate, but never alter its sentiments. To exchange your situation to advantage, you must lay down the burden that oppresses you, nor, like Orpheus, ever look behind you.

‘ You love Italy : it was there you received your life. No situation can suit you better ; no situation is so delightful. Recollect the beauty of the skies, the sea, and the mountains ; call to mind the agreeable manners of its inhabitants. You have been too long absent from this your native country : it is growing late ; the night of life is coming on. Above all things remember that solitude is fatal to you, and that the rocks and woods of Vaucluse are so many snares to your soul.

‘ Enter into yourself. Be not disgusted with age, which is approaching : or afraid of death,

that will succeed it. Time passes away, and the body decays; but the mind is incorruptible, and its maturity can never be determined. With reason has it been said, that one soul required many bodies. Consider then the nobleness of this your soul, the frailty of your body, the shortness of life, and the certainty of death. Recall the torments you have suffered, the useless tears you have shed, and the short pleasures you have obtained, which may be compared to those light zephyrs of the summer which refresh the air but for a moment. Reflect on the duties you have neglected, and the works you have begun, and yet never completed. Finally, let your prayers be fervent and sincere, that God would hear you, that he would strengthen your mind, and assist you with his grace.

‘ This is all I have to say upon the head of love. As to glory, which is founded upon fame, what is it? Words which pass through the mouths of mortals, and vanish into air! What is it, but a wind blown up by their frail breath! How many obstacles are there to an immortal name! Fashion, which changes every day, and gives to the moderns the preference over the ancients; envy, which pursues the greatest men even after death; the humor of



the vulgar, who neither love men of genius, nor Truth herself; the ignorance and inconstancy of mens' judgments; in fine, the ruin of sepulchres and monuments, which you elegantly call the second death. And can this be glory, which depends upon the duration of marble? Even books, more durable than monuments, are they not subject to a thousand accidents? They have, like us, their old age and death; and with this oblivion are the most celebrated men threatened. In reality, the true honor of man is virtue; and glory is only her shadow: it follows her every where; and the less it is sought, the more certainly is it obtained. If the earth is but a speck, and if God fills both space and time, why do vain mortals waste their short moments in such an empty pursuit? Was you assured but of one more year of life, would not you manage it with extreme economy? Alas! men are avaricious of a certain, and prodigal of an uncertain, time. They are not sure of a day, an hour, a minute, yet they set about employments of great extent, and little use. Thousands, intoxicated with this folly, die in the flower of their age, and in the midst of their projects. With one foot in heaven, and the other upon the earth, they fall into the grave. Thus do you con-

sume your time in making books, and neglect important duties to run after vain desires. Thus you pursue a shadow, and neglect your soul.

‘Abandon these things. The exploits of the Romans have been sufficiently celebrated; they do not need your praise. Leave Africa and your Scipio; you can add nothing to his glory.

‘Be yourself once again; prepare for death, and for the life that is to come.’

Thus end these excellent dialogues.

In September, 1343, the pope, who had formed a high idea of Petrarch's abilities, entrusted him with a negociation, the execution of which required both judgment and penetration. It has been observed, that Robert, king of Naples, had established a regency till his grand-daughter attained the age of twenty-five years. The pope, on his side, claimed the government of Naples during this minority; and on this account sent Petrarch to assert his right, and inform himself of what was passing in that court. The influence of cardinal Colonna, no doubt, contributed to the obtaining this commission for Petrarch. The cardinal had friends who were unjustly detained in prison at Naples, and whose freedom



he had solicited; and he flattered himself that Petrarch's eloquence and intercession would obtain their enlargement.

Petrarch went by land to Nice, where he embarked, and in his passage was near being lost. He wrote to cardinal Colonna the following account of his voyage:

‘ I embarked at Nice, the first maritime town in Italy. At night I got to Monaco; and the bad weather obliged me to pass a whole day there: this did not put me into humor. The next morning we re-embarked, and, after being tossed all day by the tempest, we arrived very late at Port Maurice. The night was dreadful: it was not possible to get to the castle; and I was obliged to put up at a village ale-house, where my bed and supper appeared tolerable, from extreme weariness and hunger. I determined to proceed by land; the perils of the road were less dreadful to me than those of the sea. I left my servants and baggage in the ship, which set sail, and I remained with only one domestic on shore.

‘ By accident, among the rocks, towards the coast of Genoa, I found some German horses, which were for sale: they were strong and serviceable. I bought them; but I was soon after obliged to take ship again, for war was

renewed between the Pisans and the people of Milan. Nature has placed limits to these states; the Po on one side, and the Appenines on the other; but pride and avarice know no bounds. I must have passed between their two armies if I had gone by land; and this obliged me to re-embark at Lerici. I passed by Corvo, that famous rock, the ruins of the city Luna, and I landed at Mutrona. From thence I went the next day on horseback to Pisa, Sienna, and Rome. My eagerness to execute your orders has made me a night-traveller, contrary to my character and disposition. I would not sleep till I paid my duty to your illustrious father, who is always my hero. I found him just the same I left him seven years ago; nay, even as hale and sprightly as when I first saw him at Avignon, which is now twelve years. What a surprising man! What majesty! What strength of mind and body! How firm his voice! how beautiful his face! Had he been a few years younger, I should have taken him for Julius Cæsar, or Scipio Africanus. Rome grows old, but not its hero. He was half undressed, and going into bed. I staid then only a moment, but I passed the whole of the next day with him. He asked me a thousand questions about you; and was much



pleased I was going to Naples. He would accompany me when I set out from Rome beyond its walls. I went to Palestrina that night, and was kindly received there by John Colonna. This is a young man of very great hopes, who follows the steps of his ancestors.

‘ I arrived at Naples the 11th of October. Heavens ! what a change has the death of one man produced in this place ! No one would know it now. Religion, justice, truth, are banished. I think I am at Memphis, Babylon, or Mecca. In the place of a king so good, so just, and so pious, a little monk, fat, rosy, barefooted, with a thorn head, and half covered with a dirty mantle ; bent by hypocrisy more than age ; lost in debauchery ; proud of his poverty, and still prouder of the gold he has amassed : this man holds the reins of this staggering empire. His cruelty and his debaucheries go beyond even those of Dionysius, Agathocles, and Phalaris. The name of this monk is brother Robert : he was an Hungarian Cordelier, and preceptor of prince Andrew, whom he entirely governed. This monster oppresses the weak, despises the great, tramples justice under foot, and treats the two queens with the greatest insolence. The court and the city

tremble before him. A mournful silence reigns in the public assemblies; and in private houses they converse by whispers. The least gesture is punished; and to think is imputed a crime.

‘How terrible for me to negotiate with such a man! I have presented to him the orders of the sovereign pontiff, and your just demands: He behaved with an insolence I cannot describe: Sufa, or Damascus, the capital of the Saracens, would have received with more respect an envoy from the holy see. The great lords imitate his pride and tyranny. The bishop of Cavaillon is the only one who opposes this torrent: But what can one lamb do in the midst of so many wolves? It is the request of a dying king alone that makes him endure so wretched a situation. How small are the hopes of my negotiation! But I shall wait with patience, though I know beforehand the answer they will give me.’

Petrarch represents queen Joan as a woman of weak understanding, and disposed to gallantry, but incapable, from her weakness, of greater crimes. She was at this time eighteen years old, and governed by an old woman, whose origin was from the dregs of the people. She was wife to a poor fisherman of Catana,



a town of Sicily, and was nurse to a child of king Robert, of which his first wife was delivered when she followed him to the siege of Trapani in Sicily. This woman was handsome, insinuating, and had found out the art of pleasing both the wives of king Robert, and the duchess of Calabria, the mother of Joan, who entrusted her with the education of her daughter. She was consummate in the art of address and the intrigues of a court, and soon gained the heart of a young princess who sought after nothing but love and pleasure. This woman had married for her second husband a Turkish slave, whom the seneschal of Naples had bought of a corsair. The seneschal took a liking to him, and gave him his freedom; from thence he became keeper of the king's wardrobe, in which post he amassed prodigious wealth. When he married the Catanese, he was made a chevalier, and by her credit obtained the place of seneschal, which became vacant by the death of his master. She had a son called Robert, for whom she obtained his father's place after his death. His person was handsome and agreeable, and it was thought that she very early procured him the good graces of the princess Joan. These people used every means to oppose the coronation of

prince Andrew, that his authority, and that of the Hungarians, might not be confirmed; and they, on their part, aimed at the destruction of the Catanese and her cabal. Such was the situation of this divided court, and it was easy to foresee it must end in some tragical event.

Petrarch, wearied out with the pretended considerations they pleaded to retard and amuse him, formed the project of visiting the mount Gargon, the port of Brindisi, and the upper coast of that sea. But the queen dowager begged he would not go so far from Naples, always saying to him, 'We must wait a little; perhaps the face of things may change.' She permitted him, however, to visit some places near, which he gives an account of in the following letter to cardinal Colonna:

'I went to Baiæ with my friends Barbatus and John Barrili. Every thing concurred to render this jaunt agreeable; good company, the beauty of the scenes, and my extreme weariness of the city I quitted. This climate, which, as far as I can judge, must be insupportable in summer, is delightful in winter. I was rejoiced to behold places described by Virgil, and, which is more surprising, by Homer before him. I have seen the Lucrine lake, famous for its fine oysters; the lake Avernus, the



waters of which are as black as pitch, with fish swimming in it of the same color: marshes formed by the standing water of Acheron, and that mountain whose roots go down to hell. The horrible aspect of this place, the thick shades with which it is covered by a surrounding wood, and the pestilential smell that this water exhales, characterise it very justly as the hell of the poets. There wants only the bark of Charon, which would indeed be unnecessary, as there is only a shallow ford to pass over. The Styx and the kingdom of Pluto are now hid from our sight. Awed by what I had heard and read of the mournful approaches to the dwellings of the dead, I was contented to view them at my feet from the top of a high mountain. The labourer, the shepherd, and the sailor, dare not approach them nearer. There are profound caverns, where some pretend much gold is concealed: covetous men, they say, have been to seek it, but they never returned; whether they lost their way in the dark vallies, or whether they had a fancy to visit the dead, being so near their habitation.

‘I have seen the ruins of the grotto of the famous Cumaean Sybil; it is a hideous rock, suspended in the Avernian lake. Its situation

strikes the mind with horror. There still remain the hundred mouths by which the gods conveyed their oracles. They are dumb at present; and there is only one God who speaks in heaven and in the earth. These uninhabited ruins serve for the nests of birds of unlucky omen. Not far from hence is that horrible cavern which leads, say they, to hell.

‘ Who would believe that, close to the mansions of the dead, nature should have placed powerful remedies for the preservation of life? Near Avernus, however, and Acheron, is that barren land from whence rises continually a salutary vapour, a cure for several diseases; and those hot springs which sound like the boiling of an iron pot: there are some which vomit cinders hot and sulphureous. I have seen the baths which nature has prepared, but the avarice of the physicians hath rendered them of doubtful use. This does not, however, prevent them from being visited by all the neighbouring towns. These hollowed mountains dazzle with the lustre of their marble arches, on which are engraved figures that point out, by the position of their hands, the part of the body each fountain is proper to cure.

‘ I saw the foundations of that admirable reservoir of Nero, which was to go from mount



Misene to the Avernian lake, and enclose all the hot waters of Baia.

‘ At Puzzoli I saw the mountain of Falernus, celebrated for its grapes, whence the famous Falernian wine. I saw likewise those enraged waves that Virgil speaks of in his Georgics, on which Cæsar put a bridle by the mole which he raised there, and which Augustus finished : it is now called the Dead Sea. I am surprised at the prodigious expence the Romans were at to build houses in the most exposed situations, to shelter them from the severities of winter ; for in the heats of summer the vallies of the Appenines, the mountains of Viterbe, the woods of Ombriu, Tivoli, Fiescate, &c. furnished them with charming shades : even the ruins of those houses are superb. But this magnificence was little suited to the Roman manners ; and on this account Marius, Cæsar, and Pompey, were praised for having dwelt upon the mountains, where they were not disturbed by the foaming of the sea, and where they trod under foot those darling pleasures which destroy mankind, by rendering them effeminate. This it was that determined Scipio Africanus to seek a retreat at Linterno ; this unparalleled hero rather chose to flee from voluptuousness than trample it under foot. I

could see nothing that would delight me more than his abode, but I had no guide that was acquainted with its situation.

‘ Of all the wonders I saw in my little journey, nothing surprised me more than the prodigious strength and extraordinary courage of a young woman called Mary, whom we saw at Puzzoli. She passed her life among soldiers; and it was a common opinion that she was so much feared, no one dared attack her honor. No warrior but envied her prowess and skill. From the flower of her age she lived in camps, and adopted the military rules and dress. Her body is that of a hardy soldier, rather than a woman, and seamed all over with the scars of honor. She is always at war with her neighbours: sometimes she attacks them with a little troop, sometimes alone; and several have died by her hand. She is perfect in all the stratagems of the military art; and suffers, with incredible patience, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and fatigue. In fine, she lies on the bare ground; her shield serves for a pillow, and she sleeps armed in the open air.

‘ I had seen her in my first voyage to Naples about three years ago; but as she was very much altered, I did not know her again. She came



forward to salute me. I returned it as to a person I was not acquainted with ; but, by her laugh, and the gestures of those about me, I suspected something ; and, observing her with more attention, I found under the helmet the face of this formidable virgin. Was I to inform you of half the things they relate of her, you would take them for fables. I will therefore confine myself to a few facts, to which I was witness. By accident, several strangers, who came to Puzzoli to see this wonder, were all assembled at the citadel to make trial of her strength. We found her alone, walking before the portico of the church, and not surprised at the concourse of the people. We begged she would give us a proof of her strength. She excused herself at first, as having a wound in her arm ; but afterwards she took up an enormous block of stone, and a piece of wood loaded with iron. “ Upon these,” said she, “ you may try your strength if you will.” After every one had attempted to move them with more or less success, she took and threw them with so much ease over our heads, that we remained confounded, and could hardly believe our eyes. At first some deceit was suspected, but there could be none. This has rendered credible what the ancients

relate of the Amazons ; and Virgil of the heroines of Italy, who were headed by Camilla.'

Petrarch was but just returned from this little journey, when the city of Naples underwent a horrible tempest, which was felt all along the coasts of the Mediterranean.

'A monk, who was the bishop of a neighbouring island, and held in great esteem for his sanctity and skill in astrology, had foretold that Naples was to be destroyed by an earthquake on the 25th of November. This prophecy spread such terror through the city, that the inhabitants abandoned their affairs to prepare themselves for death. Some hardy spirits, indeed, ridiculed those who betrayed marks of fear on the approach of a thunder storm; and, as soon as the storm was over, jestingly cried out, *See, the prophecy has failed!*

'As to myself, I was in a state between fear and hope ; but I must confess that fear sometimes got the ascendant. Accustomed to a colder climate, and in which a thunder storm in winter was a rare phænomenon, I considered what I now saw as a threatening from heaven.

'On the eve of the night in which the prophecy was to be fulfilled, a number of females, more attentive to the impending evil



than to the decorum of their sex, ran half naked through the streets, pressing their children to their bosoms. They hastened to prostrate themselves in the churches, which they deluged with their tears, crying out, with all their might, *Have mercy, O Lord! have mercy upon us!*

‘ Moved, distressed with the general consternation, I retired early to the convent of St. Laurence. The monks went to rest at the usual hour. It was the seventh day of the moon: and, as I was anxious to observe in what manner she would set, I stood looking at my window till she was hid from my sight by a neighbouring mountain. This was a little before midnight. The moon was gloomy, and overcast; nevertheless, I felt myself tolerably composed, and went to bed. But scarce had I closed my eyes, when I was awakened by the loud rattling of my chamber windows. I felt the walls of the convent violently shaken from their foundations. The lamp, which I always keep lighted through the night, was extinguished. The fear of death laid fast hold upon me.

‘ The whole city was in commotion, and you heard nothing but lamentations, and confused exhortations to make ready for the dread-

ful event. The monks, who had risen to sing their matins, terrified by the movements of the earth, ran into my chamber, armed with crosses and relics, imploring the mercy of Heaven. A prior, whose name was David, and who was considered as a saint, was at their head. The sight of these inspired us with a little courage. We proceeded to the church, which was already crowded; and here we remained during the rest of the night, expecting every moment the completion of the prophecy.

‘It is impossible to describe the horrors of that night. The elements were let loose. The noise of the thunder, the winds, and the rain, the roarings of the enraged sea, the convulsions of the heaving earth, and the distracted cries of those who felt themselves staggering on the brink of death, were dreadful beyond imagination. Never was there such a night! As soon as we apprehended that day was at hand, the altars were prepared, and the priests dressed themselves for mass. Trembling we lifted up our eyes to heaven, and then fell prostrate upon the earth.

‘The day at length appears. But what a day! Its horrors were much more terrible than those of the night. No sooner were the higher



parts of the city a little more calm, than we were struck with the outcries which we heard towards the sea. Anxious to discover what passed there, and still expecting nothing but death, we became desperate, and instantly mounting our horses, rode down to the shore.

‘ Heaven ! what a sight ! Vessels wrecked in the harbour. The strand covered with bodies which had been dashed against the rocks by the fury of the waves. Here you saw the brains of some, and the entrails of others ; there the palpitating struggles of yet remaining life. You might distinguish the groans of the men, and the shrieks of the women, even through the noise of the thunder, the roaring of the billows, and the crash of the falling houses. The sea regarded not either the restraints of men, or the barriers of nature. She no longer knew the bounds which had been set by the Almighty.

‘ That immense mole, which, stretching itself out on each hand, forms the port, was buried under the tumult of the waves ; and the lower parts of the city were so much deluged, that you could not pass along the streets without danger of being drowned.

‘ We found near the shore above a thousand Neapolitan knights, who had assembled, as it

were, to attend the funeral obsequies of their country. This splendid troop gave me a little courage. "If I die," said I to myself, "it will be at least in good company." Scarce had I made this reflection, when I heard a dreadful clamour every where around me. The sea had fapped the foundations of the place where we stood, and it was at this instant giving way. We fled therefore immediately to a more elevated ground. Hence we beheld a most tremendous sight! The sea between Naples and Capræa was covered with moving mountains: they were neither green, as in the ordinary state of the ocean, nor black, as in common storms, but white.

'The young queen rushed out of the palace bare-footed, her hair dishevelled, and her dress in the greatest disorder. She was followed by a train of females, whose dress was as loose and disorderly as her own. They went to throw themselves at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, crying aloud, *Mercy! Mercy!*

'Towards the close of the day the storm abated, the sea was calm, and the heavens serene. Those who were upon the land suffered only the pains of fear; but it was otherwise with those who were upon the water. Some Marseilles galleys, last from Cyprus, and



now ready to weigh anchor, were sunk before our eyes; nor could we give them the least assistance. Larger vessels from other nations met with the same fate in the midst of the harbour. Not a soul was saved!

‘ There was a very large vessel, which had on board four hundred criminals under sentence of death. The mode of their punishment had been changed, and they were reserved as a forlorn hope to be exposed in the first expedition against Sicily. This ship, which was stout and well built, sustained the shocks of the waves till sunset: but now she began to loosen, and to fill with water. The criminals, who were a hardy set of men, and less dismayed by death, as they had lately seen him so near at hand, struggled with the storm, and, by a bold and vigorous defence, kept death at bay till the approach of night. But their efforts were in vain. The ship began to sink. Determined, however, to put off as far as possible the moment of dissolution, they ran aloft, and hung upon the masts and rigging. At this moment the tempest was appeased, and these poor convicts were the only persons whose lives were saved in the port of Naples. Lucan says, *Fortune preserves the guilty*. And do we not find, by daily experience, that lives of little mo-

ment easily escape the perils to which they are exposed.'

Petrarch wrote this letter the day after the earthquake, and concludes with the following reflections :

' I trust that this storm will be a sufficient security against all sollicitations to make me risk my life upon the ocean. This is the only thing in which I shall dare to be a rebel; but in this I would not obey either the pope, or even my father himself, was he again to return upon the earth. I will leave the air to the birds, and the sea to the fish; for I am a land animal, and to the land will I confide myself. Send me whither you please; I will go to the furthest east, or even round the world, provided I never quit my footing upon the earth. I know very well the divines insist there is as much danger by land as by sea. It may be so. But I beseech you to permit me there to give up my life where I first received it. I like that saying of one of the ancients, *He who is shipwrecked a second time, cannot lay the fault upon Neptune.*'

Petrarch, in another letter to cardinal Colonna, speaks of the continual murders in the city of Naples.

' The streets,' says he, ' at night are filled by



young men of rank, who are armed, and attack all who pass without distinction: they must fight or die. This evil is without remedy: neither the authority of parents, the severity of the magistrates, nor the power of kings themselves, has been able to suppress it: but it is not surprising that such actions are committed at night, when they kill one another for diversion in open day. To these barbarous spectacles the people run in crowds, and shout and rejoice at the sight of human blood: even kings and princes are amused by it. Young men are seen expiring under the eyes of their parents; and it is reckoned a shame not to die with a good grace, as if it was to serve God or their country. The place destined to this butchery is near the city. One day they dragged me thither. The king and queen, with all the nobility of Naples, were assembled. I was dazzled by the magnificence of this assembly, but ignorant of the fight I was to behold; when on a sudden I heard a great noise and shouting of the people. I looked toward the place from whence it came, and saw a young man, of a very interesting figure, covered with blood, who fell down and expired at my feet. Seized with horror, I set spurs to my horse, and fled with haste from this infernal spectacle;

curfing thofe who brought me there, and the fpectators who could be pleafed with fuch a horrid fight. You will not be furprifed they retain your friends in irons, when they can amufe themfelves with the death of an innocent and amiable young man. I am tempted inftantly to quit this barbarous place; and in three days, perhaps, its fun will no longer fhine upon me. I fhall firft go into Cifalpine, and then to Tranfalpine, Gaul, eager to return to a mafter who can render every thing agreeable to me but the fea.'

Petrarch employed all his eloquence to make the Neapolitans feel the cruelty of thefe games, but in vain: it was not till fifty years after this that they were abolifhed by Charles de la Poife, king of Naples. The fituation of Naples was infupportable to Petrarch: he was, however, much honored by queen Joan, who loved letters, and wifhed to attach him to her. She made him her chaplain, and clerk in writing, as king Robert had done. Petrarch paffed a whole day, before his departure, with his friends John Barrili and Barbatus of Sulmone, whom he calls his fecond Ovid, drunk with the nectar of Hippocrene. 'They live,' fays he, 'a tranquil life; neither troubled with the noife of



children, the contentions of servants, nor the fatigues of business.'

The part of his negotiation which respected the release of prisoners Petrarch succeeded in. This was afterwards the occasion of prince Andrew's death: they were released by his interest; and he took them into the most intimate friendship, which rendered them insolent, and caused their ruin: and Petrarch was concerned he had meddled with this affair, which proved so fatal in the end to the persons concerned, as well as the prince himself.

Before Petrarch set out from Naples, there was a report spread of his death in that part of Italy between the Alps and the Appenines, and they even mourned for him at Venice. Antoine de Beccari, in rather too much haste, wrote some verses on the occasion. A sketch of this poem will serve to shew the superiority of Petrarch's genius to that of the poets who were his contemporaries. The poem is allegorical, as were most of the writings in that age. It represents a funeral procession, composed of several ladies followed by a numerous train.

Among these Grammar appears the first, supported by Priscian, and other masters famed in its rules. She celebrates the pains with which

Petrarch cultivated her regard from his tenderest youth, laments extremely his loss, and seems to fear there is not one grammarian left able to fill his place. After her comes Rhetoric, followed by Cicero, Geoffroy de Vinesouve, and Alain de Lisle, two Gothic authors of the twelfth and thirteenth century, who must be very much surpris'd to see themselves at the side of Cicero. Next comes a train of historians: Livy, Suetonius, Florus, and Eutropius with his hands joined, and his face covered, followed by the nine Muses, rending their garments, tearing their hair, and shewing all the signs of a most lively grief. Philosophy appears the next in a black robe, as a widow who laments for a husband she most tenderly loved. Plato, Aristotle, Cato, and Seneca, make up her train.

Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Statius, Horace, Lucretius, Persius, Gallus, and Lucan, support the bier, and deposit the body in the mausoleum of Parnassus, which had not been opened for several centuries. Minerva closes this procession, bringing from heaven the crown of Petrarch, which she had in her possession, and which she places in a sacred wood of pines, where it may be sheltered from the wind, the thunder, and the rain.



The poet, by a sort of envoy, addresses his own poem, and says, 'This is from Antoine de Beccari, who knows little, but would willingly learn more.' Petrarch sent this poet a few lines rather than a sonnet, in which he testifies his gratitude, and proves it by avoiding to answer him in such a manner as would have confessed his own superiority.

Petrarch set out from Naples at the end of December, and went directly to Parma, which he found in a very unhappy situation. The brothers of the family of Corregge were disunited; the city was blocked up by their enemies, and suffered all the distresses that war, famine, and internal divisions, produce. This redoubled Petrarch's desire to return to his friends at Avignon, to Laura, and to his Transalpine Parnassus, as he called his retreat at Vaucluse. The difficulty was to get out of Parma with safety. He could not pass on the western side, which was his shortest road to France; that road was shut up entirely; and if he went towards the east, he must go by the army of the enemy. There are certain uneasy situations of the mind, which cause persons of the least intrepidity to brave the greatest dangers; and such was Petrarch's. He set out in February, at sun-set, with a small number of persons, who

agreed to run the same risk as himself. About midnight, near Rheggio, a troop of robbers rushed from their ambuscade, and came down upon them, crying, 'Kill! kill!' All their resource was in flight, favored by the darkness of the night. Petrarch, in his precipitate retreat, was thrown from his horse, which had stumbled against something in the road; and the fall was so violent that he swooned. When he came to himself, he was so bruised he could scarcely move; but fear giving him strength, he remounted his horse, and was joined by his companions. They had not gone far, when a violent storm of rain and hail, with thunder and lightning, rendered their situation almost as bad as that they had escaped from, and presented them with the image of death in another shape. They passed a dreadful night, without finding a tree or the hollow of a rock to shelter them. Necessity sharpens the invention, and they contrived an expedient which guarded them in some measure from the injuries of the weather. They set the backs of their horses together on the side from whence the storm drove, and thus they made a sort of tent to cover them.

When the dawn of day permitted, Petrarch and his companions set out on their journey,



and got safely to Scandiano, a castle occupied by the Gonzagas, friends to the lords of Parma. They learned there, that if the storm had not detained them, they would have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and that they owed their safety to an accident they had considered as very unfortunate. Petrarch now felt the consequence of his fall. He wanted rest and assistance, and, with great pain and difficulty, after a few hours refreshment, got to Modena, where he slept, and the next day arrived at Bologna. He stopped there for advice: The physicians assured him that the warm weather would alone restore him to health. He was, however, so much disgusted with Italy in its present situation; or he was so eager to see Laura, without whom he felt life was insupportable, that the moment he could fit his horse, he took the road to Avignon. On approaching that city, 'I feel,' says he, 'a greater softness in the air, and I see with delight the flowers that adorn the neighbouring woods. Every thing announces the presence of Laura. I have fled from tempests and war, to seek a happy asylum in the temple of love, and behold her who can calm the winds, and clear the air from all obscuring clouds.'

Soon after his return, Petrarch went to pass

some days at Vacluse. He was charmed to see his house again, and his books. But the absence of Philip de Cabassole rendered this spot less agreeable. He was still at Naples, detained there by his attachment to the memory of the deceased king, and the desire of serving his family. Petrarch wrote the bishop this letter:

‘I fled from the fury of civil war, and have taken refuge in my old retreat. Here I find many things that please me, woods, rivers, and peace; but I find not my friend, and this place no longer charms me without his society. I am, however, well satisfied. I am here; and I am determined to pass the rest of my life in this place, if affairs do not change in Italy. This is my Parnassus. The Muses, driven out of Italy, enjoy here the tranquillity they love. You may enjoy it too; and will find yourself much happier than at Naples, as I have experienced an agreeable contrast between this place and Parma. Let others run after riches and honors; let them be marquises, princes, kings; I consent: for my own part, I am content with being a poet. But on yours, will you be always wandering? You know the courts of princes, the snares they contain, the cares that devour,



the perils that are run, the tempests to which they expose.

‘ Believe me. Come back, and repose yourself in your diocese, while fortune yet smiles upon you. You have all you want: let us leave superfluity to misers. We shall have no fine tapestries, but our hangings will be decent. Our tables will not be sumptuous, and loaded with many courses, but we shall have enough to suffice us. Our beds will not be covered with gold or purple, nor our chimnies or stairs be of marble; but we shall only sleep the easier. The hour of death approaches, and warns me to limit my desires. I confine myself to the cultivation of my gardens. I am going to plant in them fruit-trees, which shall refresh me with their shade when I go to fish under my rocks. The trees I have are old, they want to be renewed. I beg of you to order your people to procure some pear and peach trees for me at Naples. I work for my old age, which I beseech you to favor and protect. This is written to you in the midst of the woods from your hermit of the Sorga.’

About this time there was a great contention with respect to those islands we call the Canaries, and which the Romans named the For-

tunate Isles. They are situated in the Atlantic Ocean, near the kingdom of Morocco. They were called fortunate from the fruitfulness of the land, and the softness of the air. In effect, they have a perpetual spring. The rigors of winter are not felt in this climate, and the heats of summer are softened by the zephyrs which continually arise to temper and refresh the air. These islands were lost, as it were, in the decline of the Roman empire; but the Genoese found them out again in the thirteenth century. Lewis of Spain, the eldest son of Alphonzo, king of Castile, and Blanche, daughter of St. Lewis, who was charged with a negociation to the pope from the king of France, took it into his head to ask Clement to bestow on him the government of these islands. Clement, who claimed the right of giving kingdoms and reigning over kings, and who, naturally generous and benevolent, gave a kingdom with the same ease as he would bestow a benefice, granted this request; crowned Lewis at Avignon with all possible magnificence, and made a fine discourse himself upon the occasion: Lewis agreeing to sacrifice his life and wealth to drive the infidels out of these islands, to establish the true faith, to hold his kingdom from the holy see, and pay



an annual tribute. These things settled, the pope put the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, and ordered him to walk in procession through the streets of Avignon with this fine regalia, and a most splendid train. Unfortunately this pompous march was disturbed by a thunder shower, which turned this most august ceremony into a jest.

The new king, abandoned by all his court, arrived at his palace wet to the skin: a true prognostic that he would reign over nothing but fogs. In truth, Lewis gained nothing by this election but the golden crown, and the pretty name of Prince of the Fortunates, just suited to the hero of a romance. But as to Clement, he enjoyed two very sensible pleasures; the giving an entertainment, and the making of a king. 'It was said,' continues Petrarch, who gave this detail to the bishop of Cavailon, 'that the English, who looked upon the islands that formed their kingdom as the most fortunate of all others, were alarmed when they learned that the pope had given them away. Nothing can better paint the ridiculous fear of a proud and barbarous people, who were persuaded that nature had treated them better than all others, and that their superiority in all things was never to be called in question.'

There is a bon-mot related of Don Sancho, the brother of this Lewis, with which I shall close this account, as it is very similar to it.

Don Sancho having been proclaimed king of Egypt by the pope, who expected great things from his bravery, experience, and excellent education, asked the interpreter who accompanied him (for he understood not the Latin tongue) what was the reason of those shouts of applause. 'Sire,' replied he, 'the pope has created you king of Egypt.' 'We must not be ungrateful,' replied the prince. 'Go thou, and proclaim the holy father caliph of Bagdat.' 'This,' concludes Petrarch, 'is what I call a pleasantry well worthy of a king. They give to Don Sancho an ideal kingdom: he returns the favor with a chimerical pontificate.'

One day Petrarch went to walk in a delightful place near Avignon, where he often met Laura: or, if she was not there, the objects around enchanted him, and recalled a thousand pleasing sensations. As he was meditating in this delightful situation, he wrote the following lines:

'Stream, ever limpid, fresh and clear,  
Where Laura's charms appear renew'd!



Ye flowers that touch her gentle breast!  
Ye happy trees on which she leans!  
Ye scenes embellish'd by her steps!  
If grief shall close these wretched eyes,  
May some kind hand, when I am dead,  
Cover me with this happy earth,  
And lightly spread it round my tomb:  
'Twill shed delight on my abode;  
'Twill make me fearless of its gloom.  
And when my fair majestic nymph  
Shall visit this delightful spot;  
When she shall view my silent dust,  
And mark the change her love has wrought;  
Then will she waft a gentle sigh;  
Then will she drop a tender tear;  
And, like an infant at the breast,  
Who cannot speak its soft distress,  
So will the heart of gentle Laura bleed,  
And in sad silence treasure up its woe.'

1345. After the departure of Petrarch from Italy, the commotions of Parma increased. Azon de Correege, who had expressed the highest regard for Petrarch, and had loaded him with benefits, gave him the most pressing invitation to come to Verona, whither he had retired, and taken up his abode. William de Pastrengo, and other of his friends, joined in

this entreaty. Petrarch was tenderly attached to Azon, whose disposition and manner of thinking suited him in all respects. And these kind invitations staggered the resolutions he had formed, to which some other motives were added for his quitting Avignon. He had been now fourteen years attached to cardinal Colonna, who had done very little for him, and his fortune was very moderate. This master, who loved Petrarch tenderly, and had always behaved to him like a brother, was become difficult to please, unsatisfied, exacting; at least he appeared so in the eyes of Petrarch, whose free and independent spirit could not brook the least authority. The love of his country was always uppermost in his mind, and perhaps he flattered himself he should be able to promote its peace. To these motives were joined some secret reasons he did not think proper to divulge. And on these accounts he formed the resolution to quit Avignon, Laura, and Vaucluse. He went to disclose his design to cardinal Colonna, who was much displeased at it.

‘What whim has taken you,’ said he, ‘to go and fettle in Italy? You are inured to this country; you have passed your youth in it; you are known, loved, and esteemed; you have



many ties here; why should you think of leaving it?’

‘My master,’ replied Petrarch, ‘new times, new cares! This country is become odious to me. The land produces nothing but aconite. It is desolated by hail and the northern winds, and its waters are corrupted with lead. I am displeased with every thing here, even with the air I breathe. I came poor, and I leave it still poorer. There is a pride or arrogance in this court to which I cannot submit. Even you, who was so good, so gentle, so easy to live with formerly, permit me to say it, you are become restless, difficult, unsociable, and there is no living with you. When we are young, we can bear these things; but I feel that my humour changes with my years, and that I cannot support this life. I know nothing more ridiculous or melancholy than to grow old in slavery. Permit me to die free, and continue to indulge me with your favor.’

‘Ungrateful!’ said the cardinal with vivacity; ‘and is it thus you acknowledge the goodness you speak of? If I have not done for you all I wished, I have loved you sincerely, and set aside every distinction that birth had created between us.’

‘Love is repaid by love,’ replied Petrarch.

‘I have loved you ever since I had the honor of knowing you, and I shall never cease to love you. Here then we are equal.’

‘But,’ replied the cardinal, ‘what obliges you to determine with so much precipitation? All that you say of Avignon, have not you known it long, or is it a discovery that you have just made?’

‘I confess,’ replied Petrarch, ‘that I have known it long. But I have been detained by habit, by my attachment to you, and my love for Laura. Every thing alters with time. My hair, which is become grey, warns me to change my manner of thinking, and my life. Love suits not with one of my age. My friend Azon has given me a higher relish for the beauties of Italy, our country. The air is purer, the water clearer, the flowers more beautiful. The roses have a finer perfume; the fruits and herbs a finer taste. It is time I should go there to enjoy my liberty, and take possession of my father’s sepulchre. There is not a moment to lose: I ask your permission to depart.’

‘Go!’ said the cardinal with indignation. ‘You are an inconstant. You will be soon weary of the life you are going to lead: you will regret that you have left; and I prophecy



you will wish to return to it. I formed your youth; you have learned all that you know in my house. It is very disagreeable to me that another should reap the advantage. I am like the labourer who beholds a stranger gather the fruit of his pains; like the merchant who seeks from afar those merchandises he is deprived of enjoying. I do not hide from you my grief for your loss; but know I can make a shift to live without you. I foresee you will be always poor.'

The representations of the cardinal, and the solicitations of his friends, could not alter the resolution of Petrarch. He went to take leave of Laura. As she was ignorant of the motive of his visit, she received him with a smiling face: but when he had explained himself, and she found he was to leave Avignon, she changed color, cast her eyes to the ground, and kept silence. 'There was something so touching in her manner,' says Petrarch, 'no words could describe it. It seemed to say, "Alas! you are going, Petrarch! Ah! who will rob me of my faithful friend?"'

When Petrarch had bid adieu to Laura, and his two dearest friends in Avignon, the cardinal and Socrates, he set out by land, and went across Piedmont to Parma. He staid

there only a few days to settle his affairs, the city being still in commotion, and then embarked upon the Po to go to Verona, where he was impatiently expected.

The son of Petrarch, whom he had brought up secretly at Avignon, was now eight years old. Petrarch was determined to entrust his education with Renaud de Villefranche, who was esteemed an excellent master. This, no doubt, was one of Petrarch's secret motives for removing to Italy. He had not been long there before he repented; and, as cardinal Colonna had foretold, wished himself at Avignon again. In leaving Laura, he had left the half of himself; and the delightful hills and charming vallies she frequented were ever present to his mind. Petrarch was informed by Senuccio d'Elbene, that the cardinal was extremely desirous of his return, and that Laura suffered too much. It is certain she was in very great affliction for the loss of Petrarch. His friend Socrates also did all he could to engage him to return to Avignon, and wrote him the following letter:

‘What demon has taken possession of you? How could you bring yourself to abandon a country where you spent your youth so agreeably, and with so much success? How



can you live so far from Laura, whom you tenderly love, and who is so much grieved at your absence? If these things cannot touch you, reflect on the friends you have left here, who languish for want of your society, and ardently beseech you to return. Think of your Socrates, who cannot live without you. The sovereign pontiff asks continually where you are, what you are doing, and why you do not return. What charms can that country have for you which is a prey to the fury of war? Your protector, your friend Azon, also is mortal. Your fortune depends on his single life: and who knows whether his affection will last? Alas! upon whom can we depend in this world?’

Petrarch made this reply:

‘ You lose your time, my dear Socrates: my resolution is taken. I have cast anchor in the place where I am. The Rhone with all its rapidity, nor even Laura herself, can draw me from hence. To stagger my resolution, you set before me the errors of my youth and my fatal passion. Alas! I was when young too much engrossed by perishable attractions, too much tormented all my life with a fatal passion. I have left these things behind me, and I am making hasty advances to the end of my

career. The friends I have left, above all yourself, my dear Socrates, would be the strongest motives for my return. But is it not just you should come once to me in Italy, who have been so often for your sake at Avignon? The sovereign pontiff flatters me by the honor of his regard; but shall a thirst after riches and honors make me wander for ever? Is it not better to enjoy with tranquillity the little that I possess? If that friend thinks I want more, the distance of my situation need not prevent his good will. Whose influence is more extensive than his who with one hand opens the gates of heaven, and with the other shuts those of hell? But I am content with my lot, and I desire nothing beyond it. Alas! I know it; Italy is torn to pieces by intestine divisions, and threatened with foreign wars: but where can we live without peril, or find glory in the midst of peace? My friend, it is true, is mortal: but should he die, his glory and his virtues will survive. I can never suspect his affection and fidelity. If probity and candor have any habitation upon earth, they dwell in his heart. We live in the most perfect union, and this union promises to continue. Our time is divided by various employments; and the freedom and cheerfulness of our con-



versations make our days and nights pass insensibly away. When my passion for solitude comes on, I fly the city, and go wandering about the country without care or fear. In the summer, seated in the shade on a green lawn, or reclining on the bank of a river, I defy the heat of the dog-days. The autumn approaches, and I shall repair to the woods followed by the Muses. How much to be preferred is this life to that we lead in a court, where envy and ambition reign! I tread with delight upon the dust of Italy. Its air appears more pure and serene, and my eyes contemplate with joy the stars which shine over it.

‘When death shall terminate my labours, it will be a great consolation for me to repose myself in the arms of this tender friend, who will close my eyes, and deposit my remains in its mother earth. And when time, which nothing can resist, shall have mouldered away my tomb, the air of this beloved country shall gently agitate the ashes it enclosed.’

One should have supposed Petrarch well resolved, from this letter, to take up his future abode in Italy; yet such was the irresolution of his character, that soon after this he returned to Avignon. Some great business, he said, occasioned him to depart with precipitation. This

business was doubtless his love of Laura, and that inquietude of mind which attended him every where.

He set out from Verona about the end of November, 1345. The troubles of Lombardy obliged him to take his route through Switzerland. William de Pastrengo would accompany him. They slept at Peschiera, a little town on the lake of Garda, the prettiest situation one can behold. They passed the greatest part of the night in conversation. The next morning, when they arrived at the confines of Brescia and the Veronese, where they were to separate, Petrarch, in a fit of grief, fell upon the neck of his friend, and, with a flood of tears, said to him, 'Dear friend, it is with extreme concern I leave you to return into a foreign land. Perhaps I shall never see you again, but I shall love you while my life remains. Neither time nor distance can ever efface these feelings, which are deeply engraved on my heart. Take care of yourself, and never forget your Petrarch.' William de Pastrengo was in too much distress to be capable either of speech or motion: he held his friend in his arms, and it was not without difficulty they were separated. This account is in a letter of William de Pastrengo, in which, after expressing his un-



easiness for a journey undertaken in so inclement a season, across mountains buffeted by the winds, and covered with snow, he speaks with pleasantries of his life at Avignon.

‘ You have passed the Alps,’ says he to him :  
‘ I have no longer any uneasiness about that. From hence I see you paying homage to our lords, the cardinals. You make way for the first; you bow to a second; a third gives you his hand; and you are embraced by a fourth. You pay to each of them the most profound obedience. I see you performing duty at your church of St. Agneol, and from thence returning through the Elysian fields. You attach yourself to your Colonna, cultivate your laurel, and rejoice under the shadow of your Delphic crown. I felicitate your happiness; it gives me less envy than pleasure. Adieu, my dear Petrarch.’

Petrarch went on horseback from Lyons to Avignon along the banks of the Rhone. So impatient was he for the sight of Laura, he wished to follow the current of that rapid stream, which in the lofty mountains takes its source, and runs to pay its tribute to the ocean.

‘ Nor sleep nor hunger stops thy happy course; while I, though love attracts, must linger far behind. If thou shouldst pass a beau-

teous vale, and feel the air more calm and pure, suspend thy course ; for there sometimes the object I adore graces thy banks. Perhaps (shall I indulge the flattering thought?) she waits me there, and chides my long delay. Be thou my messenger of love : salute my fair one, and announce my presence.'

Nothing could be more flattering to Petrarch's self-love than the reception given him on his return. He was received by the pope and all the court with joy, and the highest marks of favor. The place of apostolic secretary was vacant at that time. It was a post of great honor, and led to an intimate connection and confidence with the pope. It was laborious; but, to compensate for that, the revenue was very considerable. Clement, who loved Petrarch, and who wished to fix him in his court, offered him this place; his friends also entreated him to accept of it; but nothing could prevail upon him: he was constant and unshaken, always answering, that he would be free, and that he hated even golden chains. The same motive had engaged Horace to refuse the place of secretary to Augustus. Upon his refusal, it was given to a Neapolitan, named Francis. Petrarch knew and had corresponded with him. 'He is a good man,' says he, 'and



my friend, as he says; but illiterate, and without reputation.'

The melancholy event that happened at this time at Naples affected Petrarch extremely. We have seen the dreadful commotions in that court. Prince Andrew had never yet been crowned in that kingdom, though acknowledged king in some foreign courts. The disgust and contempt of queen Joan towards him increased every day. She could not support those rough and vulgar manners which his unpolished education had given him, and which were so contrary to the gallantry and magnificence which reigned at Naples. Fond of her cousin, the prince of Tarentum, and governed by the Catanese and her cabal, she would never allow her husband the smallest share in the government, or express the least attachment towards him; and, it was thought, hated him for his weakness of constitution. In the midst of these dissensions, however, she proved with child. This event, and the solicitations of the Hungarians, above all the monk Robert, awakened Andrew from his lethargy, and determined him on revenge. The pope, long solicited by the Hungarian party, could no longer defer this coronation; and he fixed a day for it, on the condition that prince An-







Kirk del.

Ridley sculp.

# *Death of Prince Andrew.*

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drew should claim no right to the kingdom, which at his death was to succeed according to the will of king Robert. Every thing was settled, when the Catanese and her cabal, seeing no other means to prevent the triumph of their enemies, conspired against the life of prince Andrew. To render the execution of this plot more easy, they engaged the court to go and pass the month of September at Aveisa, a little town between Naples and Capua, very delightfully situated.

On the eighteenth of this month, at night, Andrew, almost entirely undressed, and stepping into the queen's bed, was summoned as for affairs of great consequence, and was told a courier was arrived from Naples in haste with dispatches for him. Scarcely was the prince got out of the chamber to go through the adjoining gallery, than the conspirators, after the door of the queen's apartment was shut, fell upon him with fury. One of them muffled him with gloves to smother his cries: others threw a cord with a running knot round his neck, and hung him by it upon a balcony which looked into the garden: and some, who were in the garden, pulled him with so much force by the feet, that the blood streamed out of his nose and eyes. In fine, having exercised all



forts of cruelty and abuse on his body, they let him fall into the garden, where they were going to bury him, when an Hungarian woman, nurse to the prince, put them to flight by the violence of her cries.

Queen Joan was suspected of being concerned in this shocking assassination. Her antipathy to her husband, her love for Lewis, prince of Tarentum, her union with the conspirators, who were either her lovers or her domestics, were strong suspicions, which she confirmed by marrying the prince she loved before the time of mourning for her husband was expired, and by her negligence in attempting to discover the accomplices in his murder. Some historians, however, justify her from having any hand in this black crime, and she was unanimously cleared from it by the court of Rome: also Petrarch, and his friend Boccace, did not believe her culpable. It is to be wished a young queen to whom Petrarch was attached, and who was a descendant of the great king Robert, could be justified; but it is hardly to be doubted that she knew of the plot, which was executed, at the very door of her chamber, by her lovers, her confidants, and her servants; and to know, and not prevent it, certainly made her partaker of the crime. It is not, however, surprising she

should be acquitted, for she was only eighteen years of age, and extremely beautiful.

The bishop of Cavaillon was almost a witness of this catastrophe. He had been made a cardinal by Clement since his residence at Naples. In indignation for so horrible an outrage, and disgusted with every thing in this debauched court, which he had not authority enough to remedy, he requested his dismissal, and embarked in a galley the 23d of December to return to Avignon. The next day, which was Christmas eve, a violent tempest cast him on the coast of Herculano, where they landed with difficulty. At midnight there came a courier from the queen, desiring him to come back to Naples, to baptize the child she had just brought into the world. The pope, whom she had requested to stand godfather, had left to her choice the person that should represent him on this occasion, and she gave the preference to the bishop of Cavaillon. This prelate, though fatigued by the tempest, set out immediately for Naples, and, as soon as the ceremony was over, returned to his ship, which sailed immediately. The queen having no hopes of ever seeing him again, named for her chancellor, in his place, the bishop of Montcassin, sent by the pope with the bishop of Padua to



take care of the little child, and preside over its education. The bishop of Cavaillon suffered in his second navigation a more dreadful tempest than in the former, from which he was miraculously delivered by the intercession of St. Magdalene, which he assures us of himself in a life he wrote of that saint; and which he dedicated to the archbishop of Lyons, who had a great zeal for her, and founded a chapel to her honor in that metropolis. This life is in the library of St. Victor at Paris. The bishop, thus delivered from the peril with which he was threatened, arrived safely at Avignon in January, 1346. What a joy for Petrarch again to see so dear a friend! He wished to have a particular account of the events at Naples from so good a judge. Writing some time after on this subject, to Barbatus of Sulmone, he says,

‘ I foresaw that some dreadful calamities threatened this unhappy kingdom; but I own I did not imagine that a young and innocent prince would be the first victim sacrificed to barbarity. I recollect no action like this in the tragedies of old: but our age, fruitful in crimes, produces scenes of horror unknown to the ancients, and which will prove the astonishment of posterity. O, unhappy Aveise! the com-

mon rights of humanity have been violated within thy walls, and thy subjects turned from their sacred allegiance to their king. How could a prince of such hopes, the most innocent of men, how could he deserve such cruel treatment? Had he died by the sword, or by poison, (the common fate of kings,) it would have been less affecting; but he was strangled like a thief, and torn to pieces by the fury of wild beasts. I forbear to mention the outrages on his body: why may I not by silence conceal all such horrors as these from posterity?’

We will now return to a more agreeable subject. From the situation of Laura, when Petrarch went to take leave of her, we may imagine the joy she felt at the sight of that faithful friend, who, she feared, was gone from her for ever. She did not, however, express outwardly all that passed in her soul, but she mixed nothing that was severe in her behaviour to him. Laura had this year some deep subject of grief. Petrarch does not say what; but it is probable it was the death of Ermeninda, her mother. She was penetrated with the most lively sorrow. It appears that Petrarch had now free access to her house, and that he went to console her on this occasion. ‘I went,’ says he, ‘to express my tender interest in Lau-



ra's grief. Love, who was my guide, has engraved for ever on my heart her looks and expressions.

'Her sighs would have stopped a river's course, and calm the rage of Jupiter. Tears stood in her eyes; those eyes radiant as the sun. She joined patience with sorrow, and the divine harmony of virtue with every burst of woe. Were there ever, said Love, so many charms before united with such sentiment and truth?'

A very celebrated author says, "Grief never appeared so lovely and divine as is this picture of Laura drawn by the pen of Petrarch."

This year (1346) Petrarch passed almost wholly at Avignon, and was witness to a violent quarrel between two of the principal cardinals about the election of an emperor; cardinal Taillerand and cardinal de Commenges. They disputed the matter in full council, each supported by the cardinals, who were also divided into two parties. Taillerand and his side insisted that Charles of Luxemburg should be emperor, which the Gascon cardinals opposed. Petrarch says these two cardinals resembled two bulls grazing in the pastures of St. Peter, who threaten each other with their horns, and make the forests resound with their

bellowings. In the heat of their dispute, they exclaimed in the most injurious manner, and without any regard to the presence of the pope. The cardinal de Commenges reproached the cardinal de Taillerand with having imbrued his hands in the blood of king Andrew. Provoked beyond measure at such a reproach, the cardinal de Taillerand rose from his seat to strike the cardinal de Commenges, who had got up with the same design on his part; and they would certainly have fought, if the pope and their brethren had not separated them. This indecent behaviour caused a great cabal in the court of the pope. The courtiers and servants of both parties went always armed; their palaces were barricaded; and, if they had not been brought to a reconciliation at last, in all probability much blood would have been shed. 'This comes,' says Villani, a historian of that time, 'from the fault of those popes who admit into the sacred college such proud and powerful lords. This is the example they give us poor laity; and thus they imitate the humility of the apostles, whose representatives they are.'

Among the feasts that the pope gave this year to honour the presence of the king of Bohemia, and Charles prince of Moravia, his



son, who was designed by his father for the empire, and came to concert the measures with the pope for his election, the city of Avignon gave a magnificent ball in a hall finely illuminated, at which were collected all the beauties of that city and of Provence. Charles, who was a gallant prince, having heard much of Laura, whom her beauty, and the love of Petrarch, had rendered so celebrated, sought her every where in this assembly, and having discovered her in the crowd, he passed by all the ladies whose age or rank gave them the right of superior homage, and, when he was near her, he cast down his eyes, and bowed his head after the French fashion. Every body was pleased with so great a mark of distinction given to Laura, to whom it was so justly due. This gave Petrarch a high idea of this prince's discernment, and a sympathy for him, which caused him afterwards to take a singular interest in his fame and happiness.

Petrarch went according to custom to keep his lent at Vacluse. The bishop of Cavailon, desirous to enjoy with him the delights of solitude, went for fifteen days to the castle I have mentioned built on the top of the rock, which seemed a fitter habitation for birds than for men. From what they had seen at Avig-

non and Naples, they were both disgusted with great cities, and the intrigues and cabals of courts; and returned to a country life with double relish, the charms of which they delighted to dwell upon and describe in their general conversations.

Philip had so much pleasure in all Petrarch's works, that one day, when he went to see him at Vacluse, and finding him in his library, he asked him for something to read. Petrarch presented to him the works of Cicero and of Plato. 'These are not the things I want,' said the bishop, 'bowing his head: 'give me something of your own.'

Soon after this Petrarch sent to cardinal Colonna the account of his war with the Naiads, written in Latin verse.

'You have heard me speak,' says Petrarch, 'of my war with the Naiads. The contest is about our boundaries; and the merits of the contest may be easily understood. Near the source of the Sorgia there are some huge rocks, which rise aloft on each side, and, projecting into the air, receive the winds and the clouds. The streams run at the feet of those rocks, and form the kingdom of the Naiads.

'The Sorgia issues from a cavern, and rolls her fresh and glassy waves over a variegated



bed of pebbles, which resemble emeralds. I am possessed of a little rocky district in the midst of these waves; and here it is that I have endeavored to make an establishment for the Muses, who are driven almost from every part of the world. Hence this formidable war. The Naiads take it very ill that I introduce foreigners into their dominions, and that I prefer nine old maids to a thousand young virgins.

‘ By levelling the rocks with considerable labour, I had formed a little territory, which began to be covered with verdure; when, lo! a troop of enraged Naiads rushed with fury from the rocks, and ravaged my infant settlement! Alarmed with this sudden eruption, I instantly mounted the rocks, to observe the havock which was made. As soon as the storm was over, I came down, much ashamed to have been thus vanquished, and immediately re-established my little state. Scarce, however, had the sun made his circuit round the world, when the Naiads returned again to the charge, carried every thing before them, and made deep lodgments in the hollows of my rocks.

‘ Filled with resentment, I resumed my operations, determined to accomplish my design. But I was obliged soon after to go into

other countries, and was under the necessity of abandoning the enterprize. I had the good fortune, however, to restore the Muses to the Roman state, where they were become in a great measure strangers, and fixed them in the capitol. Six years had elapsed, during which time I had often crossed the sea, and had passed and repassed the Alps. At length I returned to the seat of war, and found not the least remains of my labours. The enemy had taken advantage of my absence, and had again ravaged my little kingdom. Nay, they had even established a colony of fish, which I observed swimming about much at their ease.

‘ Roused with indignation, I again take arms. I enlist under my banner the shepherd, the farmer, and the fisherman. The sun likewise, the moon, and the dog-star, appear as my auxiliaries. We attack the rocks with iron, and rend away prodigious masses. We open the bowels of the earth, and tear out her bones. In fine, the Naiads are a second time driven from the territory, and the Muses are once more established.

‘ The Naiads, as they roll their waves along my shores, see with regret their own defeat, and my triumph. At present they utter only some vain murmurs and ineffectual threats;



but I foresee their intentions, and am well aware of their wiles. They are waiting till Aquarius shall pour out his streams, and till the mountains shall be covered with snow and ice; and then they expect that the cavern will send forth her swelling billows to their aid. But I am guarded on every side. Some immense rocks, which have with difficulty been ranged about my territory, are a sufficient barrier against their utmost efforts. And I am not dismayed, though I should be attacked by all the waters of the Po and the Araxes. The Muses are now securely fixed on their new Parnassus; you see the mountain with the double summit, the springs of Hippocrene, the woods of the poets, &c. &c.

‘ If you prefer the repose of the country to the bustle of the town, come and enjoy it here. Be not frightened with the homeliness of my fare, or the hardness of my beds. Even kings themselves are sometimes cloyed with their luxuries, and seek out a plainer diet; the variety delights, and they return to their former pleasures with more exquisite relish. But if you think otherwise, bring with you the richest dainties, and the viands of Vesuvius; your vessels of silver, and every thing which can court the sense. Leave the rest to me.

You shall have a bed upon the green turf, under the shade of the trees; a concert of nightingales; figs, raisins, and water fresh drawn from the coolest springs. In one word, you shall have every thing which can be supplied by the hand of Nature, the only source of true pleasure.'

The war with the Naiads was finally terminated the following year; and Petrarch gives the cardinal an account of this accommodation in another Latin epistle.

'It is now ten years since this war commenced. The siege of Troy, and the conquest of Gaul by our forefathers, were not of longer duration. Every effort was ineffectual. [The Naiads were victorious. I threw down my arms, and my territory was subdued. I raised no more banks, no more rocks, to check their progress; henceforward they moved at liberty; and, like a cautious pilot, I adapted my sails to the course of the wind.

'It was a great pleasure to me to drive the Naiads from their empire; but then the war was to be renewed every year. The summer was favorable to my projects, but the winter restored again to the enemy all my conquests. Might I be allowed to draw a parallel between the labors of a poet and those of the greatest



princes, I should compare my enterprize to that of Xerxes, who threw a bridge over the Hellespont; to that of Cæsar, who attempted to bind with chains the horns of Brundisium; or to that of Caligula, who exhibited on the sea of Baiæ the third example of a mad and unbounded pride.

‘My plan is now changed. I find it is impossible to conquer nature, or subdue the elements. I have given, therefore, a free course to the Naiads, and have placed the Muses in a little nook towards the bottom of the rocks. They are secured by a kind of rampart, which the Naiads can never overthrow without sapping the foundations of the mountain. The habitation is very small, but it is sufficient; for the Muses have few visitors, and are not at all beloved by the vulgar.’

It appears that cardinal Colonna accepted this invitation of Petrarch's, and that he passed no year without visiting his hermitage. We will now return again to Laura.

She had a friend who was wise and amiable, and who was in the interests of Petrarch as much as virtue and honor permitted. She wished him to be loved, but with a pure and tender friendship. When she saw him rejected, and almost in despair, she encouraged him,

and re-animated his spirits; but she restrained him also when he required it. On the other side, she did all she could to engage Laura to treat Petrarch with less rigor. One day, when she represented to him the tender expressions of love in Laura's countenance and behaviour when he deserved them; 'Incredulous!' adds she; 'and can you, after all this, have any doubt of her affection?' This friend appears in the vision of the death of Laura, where she is described as a soft voice speaking to Petrarch.

The constitution of Laura was very delicate; her frequent confinements in childbed, and some domestic chagrins, had exhausted her so much, that, though still young, her health began to decline, and she drooped apace, which touched Petrarch to the soul. 'Virtue,' says he, 'would disappear with Laura; the world would be another chaos, and no sun would enlighten its dark mansion. O, Heaven! grant me to die before Laura, that I may never see so dreadful an event.' Laura had a complaint in her eyes this year, which was extremely painful; she was even threatened with the loss of sight.

'My tears,' says Petrarch, 'were dried up; my state peaceful and happy; when a thick cloud threatened with a total eclipse the sun of



my life. Oh, Nature, thou wise and tender mother, canst thou have the heart to destroy the finest of thy works ?'

Petrarch went often to see Laura in her confinement : he found her one day cured of her complaint ; and by a sort of sympathy, the cause of which lovers can better explain than physicians, the defluxion passed immediately from the eyes of Laura to those of Petrarch. He looked upon this passage, this communication, as the greatest favor he had received at the hands of Love. ' I fixed my eyes on Laura's, says he, ' and that moment a something inexpressible, like a shooting star, darted from them to mine. This is a present from love in which I rejoice. How delightful it is thus to cure the darling object of one's soul !'

Petrarch would have been too happy in so much kindness from Laura, if a little quarrel had not happened between them, which for a time gave him the most sensible concern. One of those meddling envious people, who are found in every place, and who delight in troubling the peace of families with their false and idle tales, and above all aim at dividing those hearts which are united in the bonds of love or friendship, got it reported to Laura, that Petrarch imposed upon her ; that she was not the

real object of his love and of his verses; but that, under her borrowed name, he hid from the public a passion he had for another lady, to whom his poetry was secretly addressed. Laura, too much like her sex in this particular, gave ear to a report so destitute of all probability: she deprived Petrarch of her presence and conversation, and took every precaution to prevent the possibility of his seeing her. He, on his part, watched for her every where, and by these little stratagems he sometimes obtained a sight of her. 'My joys,' says he, 'are like the bright days of winter, of flattering aspect, but short duration.'

This little anecdote, with many others, may serve to remove the doubt some have unjustly entertained of the strength of Laura's affection for Petrarch, representing her as a coquette, pleased only with his praises and admiration. But how different does her character appear to those who study it attentively; and, in particular, how undivided and constant was her love! Sure characteristics of a perfect affection, and directly opposite to the behaviour of those women who are famed for coquetry. I doubt not that as her ruined constitution was owing to many private chagrins, only hinted at by Petrarch, (such as an unkind husband, and



the perceiving in some of her children dispositions that were unpromising,) so the decay of her health might arise also from her anxiety in her frequent separations from Petrarch; especially the last, which she had so tenderly lamented; and that attention in all her conduct towards him, which will wear out a mind formed with the sensibility of Laura's. And to this we ought to impute her weakness in crediting so absurd a report; the only weakness, except her love itself, that appears in her character. She was, however, too reasonable to continue for any time so unjust a quarrel. She was convinced of the innocence of Petrarch, and received him as usual. Our poet, re-established in the good graces of Laura, recovered his lost tranquillity.

It may be recollected that Petrarch was made archdeacon of Parma, and kindly treated by Hugolin de Rossi, the bishop. An occasion offering to add a prebend to it, the pope did not let it slip, but gave it to Petrarch. The other canons, who looked upon him with envy, did all they could to embroil him with the bishop. The character of Hugolin was too easily wrought upon; that softness of manners, and that good-nature which rendered him so amiable in society, occasioned great defects in his public

character. He was apt to believe all that was said to him, and flatterers turned him which way they pleased. The enemies of Petrarch persuaded this bishop that Petrarch was gone to Avignon to calumniate his character, and that he only staid there to gain this end. Petrarch, informed of these false reports, and solicitous to preserve the good opinion of the bishop, wrote him the following letter :

‘I can hold no longer. Permit me to disburthen my heart to you. Nature has endued you with a sincere, kind, and equitable disposition. I am attached to you ; but you have conceived unjust suspicions of me, which have no foundation. I know not what serpents have breathed their venom around you. Permit me to debate this matter. We are in the month of December, when slaves among the ancients were allowed to say every thing to their masters. There are a set of envious spirits, who delight to separate friends. Let such be put away ; I have no contest with them ; I despise them from my soul. I will have you only, my father, for my witness and my judge : if you condemn me, I will appeal from you to your conscience ; that shall absolve me. They tell you I am come to this court to do you a mischief. I seek to hurt any one !



I! who from my childhood have suffered with patience all the wrongs done to me from those who owed me service? Have I ever returned evil for evil? Have I ever set a snare even for my enemies? Have I attacked the reputation of any one, his property, or his person? Let my life be examined with the strictest severity, nothing of this sort will be found in it. Attacked by those who hated me, I have often contained my anger in my breast, to the hazard of being thought a coward. Sometimes I have lamented and complained: the dove and the lamb do so too. There is not a single person whose reputation is wounded by my tongue. I have only to accuse myself of some letters, in which I answer my censurers without naming them. I never in any justification have passed the bounds of decency and humanity. I have rather imitated the moderation of Scipio, who would never revenge any affront he had received from his countrymen. I think with the satirist, that vengeance should be left to women; and when grieved to the bottom of my soul, I trust my cause to God. Having thus treated my enemies with gentleness, am I capable of attacking my friends? A lamb among wolves, shall I become a wolf among lambs? Of what use would it be to me to fly

cities and public affairs, to seek solitude, repose, and silence, if my place was among the wicked?

‘I now experience the truth of what was told me, that to learn to live well is the most difficult of all arts. The event of our conduct seldom answers the intention. I have in my life passed for a magician and forcerer, because I loved to be alone, and to read Virgil. Apuleius merited this accusation better than myself, which he refuted by his elegant work called the Golden Ass. How difficult is it to save the bark of reputation from the rocks of ignorance! Exercise your genius, pass whole nights in labor, give to the public a good book; if there is any thing in it (as there must be many things) which the ignorant do not understand, they will say immediately you are a forcerer. But this is a trifle. I would rather they should attack my understanding than my heart: I would rather pass for a magician than a knave. But even into this precipice am I fallen, which I have always avoided with care. Envy pursues me to my most secret retreats. Persius had reason for this exclamation, How vain are the cries of men, how frivolous their occupations! The only motives which induce men to do evil, to wrong one another, are hatred, wrath, envy,



fear, or hope. I hate you, my father! You have never done me any evil: on the contrary, before I had the honor of filling up the first place after yours in your church, you treated me with an unmerited distinction. As to wrath, that could have no place; our conversations were always peaceful and friendly. As to envy, I take God and my conscience to witness I never envied any man; I wish I could say as much of contempt. Content with my lot, I have more reason to fear the envy of others towards me. My father, if I might speak with so much freedom, I would add, I pity your fate, and that of your brethren, who have the weight of a diocese to support. But trouble and perplexity is the lot of all who play a first part on the stage of this world. And lastly, as to hope, would that cause me to injure you? Your fall would never be my rise. And allow me to assure you, I would not exchange my repose for your labours, my poverty for your riches. It is not that I despise your fortune; but, if I was offered the same rank, nothing would persuade me to accept of it. I should not speak in this manner, perhaps, if I had not known the sovereign pontiff, and those men who shine around him in the Roman purple. But the connection I have had with them

has convinced me that their felicity is a shadow without a reality. Pope Adrian IV. says, in his Philosophical Trifles, "I know no person more unhappy than the sovereign pontiff. Labor alone, were that his only evil, would destroy him in a short time. His seat is full of thorns, his robe stuck with points, and of an overwhelming weight. His crown and tiara shine, but it is with a fire that will consume him. I have risen by degrees," adds he, "from the lowest to the highest dignity in this world, and have never found that any of these elevations made the least addition to my happiness. On the contrary, I feel it impossible to bear the load with which I am charged."

'I will add, in vanity, that, had I emulated your dignity, I might have possessed a more valuable situation than yours; but I have always preferred a modest liberty to a brilliant slavery. If the person who would so highly have honored me was not still alive, I would not have made this boast: and it should rather appear that my heart was disposed towards you, when I accepted the archdeaconry of your church after refusing more considerable benefices. What, say my enemies, then, does he absent himself for? What is he doing at court; I will tell you. I languish, I suffer, I lose my time;



the greatest loss we can sustain in this world : but I cannot resist some friends who detain me. It would be easier for me to tell you what I do not do, than the business I am employed in. I hurt no one but myself. Instead of injuring you, I would be of service to you, if possible. To suspect a man who thinks this, is an error : to hate him, will be a cruelty. I conjure you, by all that is most sacred, banish suspicion ; it is the bane of friendship. Vouchsafe to receive me among the number of your friends. I have long trusted in this indulgence. If you doubt my fidelity, put it to the proof. If you judge me unworthy of your kindness, cast me off without harshness. You will lose nothing by rejecting me ; but your reputation would suffer, and that would be a great loss to you.'

Petrarch had a friend at Parma, called Luke Christien. He was born at Rome, and possessed a benefice at Placentia. He was attached to the house of Colonna, and was often at the cardinal's. Petrarch had lately resigned to him a canonry of Modena, which the pope had conferred on him, and which, according to the custom of that age, he might have held with his archdeaconry. To this friend he gave his letter for the bishop of Parma, charging him to second it with all that friendship could suggest.

‘ You know better than any one,’ said Petrarch, ‘ what I think of our bishop, when he is not surrounded by flatterers, who are the pest of the great. We shall see what will be his answer to my long letter. Examine him with attention : the pen alone will not pourtray the heart ; the air, the gesture, the color, the voice, the forehead, the foot, the hand, the eyes, the eyebrows, all speak. But to those who are absent, this language is lost. Be very observant of these things, and suffer me not to be deceived. I have done all that I could to dissipate unjust suspicions. I have kindled the lamp of truth, if he will open his eyes to behold it. If not, I have discharged my conscience, and shall use no further arguments. Constraint will never produce conviction.’

Some days after this Petrarch went to Vaucluse with his friend Socrates. The bishop of Cavaillon sent a message to them immediately on their arrival, inviting them both to come and see him, without any ceremony, in the same dress they were in. Petrarch replied by the following billet :

‘ Yesterday we quitted the city of storms, to come and take refuge in this port, and taste the sweetness of repose. We have only coarse garments, such as suit the season of the year,



and the place we inhabit. We will come to you in this rustic fashion, since you will have it so. We do not scruple appearing thus in your town; and the desire we have to see you is so strong, as to rise above all other considerations. Of little consequence is our outward appearance before a friend who can read the most secret thoughts of our hearts. If you wish to see us often, you will not refuse the indulgence we ask, that you will always prove your friendship by treating us with the utmost freedom.'

These journies of Petrarch to Vacluse were short. It appears that his affairs at Avignon detained him. Sometimes he passed only a day to prune his trees, and look round his gardens. He gives a pleasing description of one of these days in a letter to William de Pastrengo :

' My disgust to the city, and the love of the country, has brought me to this fountain, which has the virtue of giving wings to the imagination. You recollect that field formerly covered with stones; at present it is become a garden enamelled with flowers. The river Sorgia refreshes it on one side: I have enclosed it with a wall to the south, and high rocks on the other side shade it from the morning sun.

On these rocks the birds make their nests; some deck them with moss, others with the leaves of trees. It is a charming sight to see these tender animals just peeping from their eggs, and soon after with fear and quaking trying their little wings, and seizing with their timid beaks the food that is brought them. When I walk in the meadows on the banks of my river, when I examine the trees I ingrafted myself, and the laurels I have transplanted from foreign countries, the image of my dear William appears to me on every side; the hillock on which we sat, the bank on which we reposed, the ducks and drakes we diverted ourselves with making in the water that was running at our feet. Here we entertained ourselves with recalling the Muses from their long exile, with comparing the Greek and Latin poets: here we gave ourselves up to the delights of unrestrained conversation, and should have forgotten our evening refreshment, had we not been reminded by the shades of night.

In the midst of such agreeable ideas time passes imperceptibly; the day wears; and I found I must depart. I had scarcely got out of the narrow passage which encloses this valley, when the wings of darkness came over me, and I redoubled my steps. Descending along the



side of the river, I perceived a group of men and women, who were coming towards me. The French luxury, which has confounded the dress of the sexes, prevented me at first from distinguishing them; but, as they approached nearer, their faces became plain, and the ambiguity disappeared: I discovered ribbands, necklaces of pearls, ornaments on the head, rings, and gowns edged with purple. We saluted each other. What an agreeable surprise, my dear William! I discovered the object of your love, the beauty whom I observed you so enchanted with. What a countenance! What features! With her bow and quiver, I should have taken her for Diana. I see my friend with pleasure in the eyes of this nymph. After saluting me, she took hold of my hand, and we entered into conversation. But first I addressed myself to the company. "May I ask," said I, "without impertinence, what is the intention of your walk?" "We are going," they answered, "to see that fountain so much spoken of." But I was not thus to be deceived. Your beautiful mistress was not ignorant of your situation here; and this journey was a good excuse to seek your image, and retrace your steps. I read this in her face; and all those who know by experience the ready stratagems

of love, would have been of the same opinion. Her steps were quick: she had an ardor, a gaiety, a satisfaction in viewing these places, which could arise from nothing but this passion. I would return with her to the fountain. I thought I was with you, that I saw and heard you. The eyes of your nymph sparkled with that vivid flame, the warmth of which is so delightful to lovers. We conversed about you; and I should have been there still if night had not separated us.'

1347. Petrarch had not seen his brother since he had taken the habit, which was five years. He went thither in the beginning of February, and was received by them as a messenger from heaven. What was his joy to see that brother whom he so tenderly loved, and whose taste for the world had given him so much anxiety, content with the state he had embraced, and not regretting that he had forsaken! The Carthusians, who had heard Petrarch spoken of as the finest genius and the most eloquent man of the age, flattered themselves he would give them some discourses suited to their condition. He staid only one day and night with them; but, at his departure, he promised to send them a treatise on the happiness of a monastic life; and he kept



his word. The intention of this work was to compare the peace and harmony of their state with the uneasy and turbulent lives led by the people of the world. In his letter he writes thus:

‘My desires are fulfilled. I have been in paradise, and seen the angels of heaven in the form of men. Happy family of Jesus Christ! How was I ravished in the contemplation of that sacred hermitage, that pious temple, which resounded with celestial psalmody! In the midst of these transports, in the pleasure of embracing the dear deposit I confided to your care, and in discoursing with him, and with you, time ran so rapidly that I scarcely perceived its progress. I never spent a shorter day or night. I came to seek one brother, and I found a hundred. You did not treat me as a common guest. The activity and the ardor with which you rendered me all sorts of services, the agreeable conversations I had with you in general and particular, made me fear I should interrupt the course of your devout exercises. I felt it was my duty to leave you, but it was with extreme pain I deprived myself of hearing those sacred oracles you deliver. I did propose to have made you a short discourse; but I was so absorbed, I could not find a moment to think

of it. In my solitude I ruminate over that precious balm which I gathered, like the bee, from the flowers of your holy retreat. I shall write to you the things I ought to have said. I believe myself always with you.'

Petrarch composed this treatise in the year 1347. He passed the Lent of this year at Vacluse, according to custom. His friend Lelius, who came with him, was obliged to leave him before the end of April; and, not being able to bid him adieu, went away without saying a word. A little event, which happened at Thor, furnished Petrarch with an occasion to write to this friend soon after his return to Avignon. Thor is a little town, two leagues from Vacluse. The duke of Ancefun, a descendant from Laura by the mother's side, is the present lord of Thor. Gerard Amic possessed it at this time. He was a man given up to debauchery. Persuaded that every thing upon earth ought to contribute to his pleasures, he looked upon the whole world as his *seraglio*. A young man, fond of a girl who lived near him, obtained her person under the promise of marriage. The girl, who was very pretty, was so unfortunate as to please this lord, who used every stratagem to seduce her, but in vain. Love to this youth prevailed over vanity and interest.



Gerard, not enduring the pre-eminence given to another, had him accused before his tribunal of violating this maiden, and he was cast into prison. When the girl was interrogated, she denied the violation, and frankly confessed she had consented to all that passed, and only demanded from her lover, that he should perform his promise of marrying her. The young man wished nothing so much. 'Let them take off my irons,' said he, 'and I am ready to do what she asks of me.' They were both free, and of a suitable age and station. This affair, which was very plain, took an unhappy turn, because the rival was also the judge, and determined on revenge. He therefore threatened the young man that he should be hanged for this offence. So great an injustice raised all the neighbourhood of Thor against him. The touching situation of these young persons, who loved one another, and were desirous of being united, interested every body in their behalf. Some friends of Petrarch came to beg him, with tears in their eyes, to employ his credit in the court of Avignon to save this unfortunate youth, whose life was in such imminent peril. Petrarch sent express to Avignon his faithful fisherman with this letter for Lelius:

'It happened with us as with Pompey and

Cornelia, who had not the power when they parted to bid one another adieu. Words are, in fact, but the shadows of our thoughts. Of what use are long discourses between friends whose souls are diffused into each other? I have a good work to propose to you, and I hope you will co-operate with me in it.' Petrarch then mentions the fact, and says,

'My friend, both you and I have experienced the distresses of love, and it is but just we should lend our aid to those who suffer from this passion. It is true, the great soul of our master is exempt from these weaknesses; but he is not the less sensible to human misery. Let them not say, that in the country they feel not the flames of love: it is a mistake; that little god extends his empire over all nature: every thing that breathes is subject to his laws. Virgil says, the follies he occasions ought to be pardoned; but he adds, if the gods of hell know how to pardon. I doubt that Bellerophon, who has no humanity, will be as inexorable as these gods themselves. Heated by jealousy, he thirsts after the blood of a rival preferred to himself. Beg our master to write to him, to demand the liberty of this unhappy prisoner. The courier who brings you my letter is the young man's friend: he



will tell you his name, and add every minute circumstance. Whatever be the event, you and I have done all that depends on us to succour these unfortunate lovers, whose situation is more affecting than can be expressed.'

Three days after this, the letter from cardinal Colonna to the lord of Thor not being arrived, Petrarch was obliged to send the same courier again to Avignon. The report was spread abroad that the young man was to be condemned and executed immediately, and that his irritated judge had shut his ears against every solicitation. Petrarch was again besought to write to Lelius; and with his letter he sent him some virgin oil from Vacluse, (so they call the oil which runs from the olive without being pressed;) and he adds, 'I should think that Minerva, who discovered the olive-tree, had quitted Athens for Vacluse, if in my Africa I had not placed her at Lerici and Porto Venere.' Petrarch does not tell us what was the event of this affair. It marks the despotism of the lords of provinces, and the humanity and public spirit of Petrarch, who could not bear tyrants of any sort, either great or small, or any thing that tended to encroach on the liberty of human nature. This manner of thinking caused him, however, to favor Rienzi's

usurpation, which he repented of afterwards, and for which he has been bitterly reproached. This extraordinary affair was as follows :

Nicholas de Rienzi, whom the reader will recollect on an embassy to Rome, had long conceived the project of drawing the Roman people out of their lethargy, and the slavery they were held in. His conversations with Petrarch, who was persuaded Rome ought to govern the world, no doubt confirmed him in this astonishing enterprize. He discharged his office of apostolic notary, given him by the pope, with great appearance of honor, justice, and disinterestedness ; and went about declaiming every where against the injustice of the great. After he had thus prepared the minds of the people for a revolution, he caused little emblematical pictures to be stuck up every where, which expressed the misery of the Romans in their present state, compared with their past grandeur and felicity. These emblems he explained, and took the occasion to harangue the assembly with sighs, groans, tears, and expressions of indignation. He then assembled in secret those who appeared best prepared for his confidence. Stephen Colonna, who would never have suffered such meetings, was absent. When he had worked up



the Romans to the disposition he wished, he assured them of sufficient means to re-establish the good state of Rome ; which was a phrase of raillery with its present great men. ‘ In the funds of the apostolic chamber,’ adds he, ‘ I have all that is necessary for this enterprize. But God forbid I should touch it without the will of the sovereign pontiff.’ This was a cunning turn to rest his conduct on the pleasure of the pope : and though the Romans were much disgusted with the holy father for enriching the city of Avignon with their spoils, they did not choose openly to oppose him, and were pleased with Rienzi, who had found a pretext to retain this money at Rome without offending the pope.

They unanimously, therefore, proclaimed Rienzi their chief, and devoted themselves to his will. He made them sign an oath, to which he first put his own name, to procure the good state of Rome.

In May, 1347, he had it cried in the streets, by sound of trumpet, that each citizen should come without arms the next night to the church of the castle of St. Angelo, at the ringing of the great bell. It was inconceivable how a man without name, support, or dignity, should think of convoking an assembly of con-

spirators by the found of trumpet. It succeeded, however, and the Roman people ran in crowds to the church at the time appointed, where Rienzi had thirty masses for the Holy Spirit repeated almost together, at which he himself assisted from midnight till nine in the morning, which was the day of Pentecost, when he chose that it might be believed he was inspired by the Holy Ghost. He then went out of the church with his head bare, but armed, and a hundred men to escort him, armed likewise. The people followed him in crowds, without any knowledge of what he was going about. He walked at the side of Raimond, bishop of Orviete, the pope's vicar. He was a good man, a great canonist, but little suited to represent the sovereign pontiff, as his assisting on this occasion is a proof, which he ought with all his power to have opposed. In the midst of this train, who redoubled their acclamations, Rienzi marched straight to the capitol, and then mounted the tribunal, from whence he harangued the people, and proposed all the regulations they wished for; freedom from oppression, peace and plenty, which were to be accomplished at the pope's expence, and on pretence of serving him. The presence of his vicar appeared to justify him in all, and to give



a sanction to his authority. Rienzi was declared by the people, as Vespasian was by the senate, sovereign of Rome with unbounded authority. Rienzi, at the summit of his wishes, consented to accept their offer only on two conditions: The first, that they should give him the pope's vicar for a colleague; the second, that the pope should approve what they had done. The good bishop supported a very ridiculous part in this scene. It is not known whether he approved it, or found it of no use to oppose his single authority. Rienzi, after having dismissed the people, took possession of the palace, from whence he drove out the senators, and dictated his laws from the capitol.

There never was an example of a revolution so quick, so tranquil, and so singular, in all its circumstances. The great lords of Rome had regarded Rienzi as a buffoon, who diverted the people by his wit; and even the Colonnas invited him to their palace for their amusement, and looked upon him as a fool. What was the astonishment of old Stephen Colonna when he learned what had passed! He came to Rome, and expressed his discontent. Rienzi, by a writing, ordered him to leave Rome directly. Stephen took the writing, and tore it,

saying, 'I will have that fool thrown from the windows of the capitol.' But, perceiving that the commotion was general, and they were going to surround his palace, he mounted his horse, and retired to Palestrina, where his family resided. He had scarcely time to stop at St. Laurent to eat a morsel of bread.

Rienzi in the mean while published the strictest orders for the punishment of all the public malefactors, and all known villains; and this necessary severity gained him the hearts of the people, to which he joined an exact justice in the regulation of public affairs. The noise of this transaction soon spread over Europe. The court of Avignon was seized with a panic terror: but when they read the letters sent by Rienzi and the bishop of Orvietti, whom they had obliged to write in concert with him, they were a little reassured. These letters breathed nothing but zeal for the church, disinterestedness, and the deliverance of Rome from misery and oppression; and concluded by requesting the confirmation of an authority he had only accepted at the will of his holiness, and which he meant to exercise in conjunction with his vicar. The court of the pope, though extremely shocked at this enterprise, thought it



best to dissemble, and appear to approve what they could not prevent.

The pope confirmed Rienzi with the bishop in their rights, exhorting them to merit the continuance of his protection and regard. Rienzi then required the people to invest him with an authority that should render him independent of any but themselves, under the title of tribune, and to associate the pope's vicar with him. The people assented to this, and proclaimed both of them with the greatest acclamations. Rienzi, informed by his spies that the nobles he had banished to their castles held secret assemblies, cited them to his tribunal, and they were forced to obey. Stephen Colonna the younger was the first, and appeared extremely moved. He obliged him and the other lords to take an oath, that they would never take up arms against him or the Roman people. After this he determined to make an example of terror of a young nobleman, who was immersed in vice, and detested for his acts of violence. He was the nephew of two cardinals, and had been himself a senator. Rienzi had him taken by force out of his palace. They tore him from the arms of a young widow to whom he was just married, and dragged him

to the capitol, where he was judged, condemned, and executed the same day, almost under the eyes of his wife. From her windows she could see the body of her husband hanging at the post, where he remained two days. He cut off the head of another lord, who had done something against his orders; and then dragged to prison, in open day, Peter Agapit Colonna, who had been senator that year. These examples rendered the nobles more circumspect and complying. After these transactions, Rienzi reformed all the public abuses: the success of his endeavours was incredible: the highways became sure; the people resumed the cultivation of their lands; pilgrims came and went in safety; commerce revived; and even the markets and shops became schools of sincerity and truth. A Bolognese returning from Babylon, where he had been a slave to the sultan, said, that this prince, having heard there had appeared an extraordinary man at Rome, who did justice, and protected the people, cried out in disorder, 'that Mahomet and Elias were come to the succour of Jerusalem.' Rienzi now sent couriers to all the states of Italy: His view was to unite and form them into one great republic under Rome. Many of them entered into his views; and, what was more



flattering, the king of Hungary sent a solemn embassy to him, to decide the affair of his brother Andrew's death. It was solemnly pleaded before Rienzi, who was seated on his throne, having his crown on his head, and in his hand a silver apple with a cross; but he deferred giving judgment on a matter which must have armed against him one of the powers in dispute. Philip of Valois, king of France, was almost the only power who was not dazzled by the sudden elevation of the tribune, and who formed a just idea of his character.

The letters of Petrarch to Rienzi prove their union, and Petrarch's detestation of the insupportable tyranny exercised by the nobility over the people. Most of these nobles were strangers, who came from the borders of the Rhine, the Rhone, from Spoleta, &c. to settle at Rome, and had taken from those who had a right to them the public offices and honors. Their palaces in that city, and their castles in the country, were so many fortresses, where they shut themselves up, and from whence they only made excursions to commit all sorts of violence and robbery; and Rienzi acted at first in the best manner, and took the wisest methods to destroy their tyranny.

An enterprize so hardy as Rienzi's could not

be executed without envy, and drawing a great number of enemies upon its author. He appeared often in a magnificent chapel, surrounded with iron bars, which he had built in the capitol, where divine service was celebrated with all imaginable pomp, being seated on a sort of throne; the barons of Rome standing before him with their arms crossed upon their breasts, and their cowls let down on their backs; and they were often seen in this humiliating situation. In the progress of these memoirs we shall find the dreadful consequences of this transaction of Rienzi's. We shall here only subjoin Petrarch's first letter to him, and Rienzi's answer.

After having exhorted the Romans to unite against the tyrants who oppressed them, and pillaged from the public treasure to enrich themselves, and to concur with their tribune in the re-establishment of the republic, Petrarch thus addresses himself to Rienzi:

'Intrepid man! who dost alone support the heavy weight of the republic, watch with more care over its bad citizens than over its declared enemies. Modern Brutus! let the example of the ancient be ever before you. He was a consul: you are a tribune. Let history be consulted, and it will be seen that the consuls



have sometimes done atrocious things against the people. The tribunes, on the contrary, have always been their most zealous defenders. If the first consul sacrificed his own children to the liberty of his country, what ought we not to expect from a tribune? Be advised by me, and yield nothing to friendship or to blood; but hold as your worst enemy whoever is the enemy of the public freedom. Illustrious man! the Romans, and their posterity, will owe to you the great happiness, of living and of dying free.

‘ I had two requests to make you. The first of them I learn you have already fulfilled, and that you undertake nothing without first strengthening your soul in receiving the body of the Lord with the requisite dispositions of mind. I cannot enough commend this devout practice, which I meant to propose to you. My second desire was, that you should imitate Augustus, who employed that small portion of time which he could gain from his public occupations, in reading or hearing the history of those great men whose characters might serve as models for himself.

‘ Why can I not unite with you to procure so great a good? But my situation will not permit me: by my pen alone can I discharge

my duty as a citizen. If you persevere as you have begun, you will hear me sing your praise in a higher key, and spread your fame throughout the world. You have laid excellent foundations; justice, truth, peace, and liberty. In your letters are seen the greatness of your courage, and the dignity of the Roman people, without invading the respect due to the sovereign pontiff. Your expressions, though firm, are modest; they have nothing in them either of a slavish fear, or a foolish presumption; and it is doubtful whether your actions or style are most to be admired. They say you speak like Cicero, while you act like Brutus. You ought to consider yourself as a man placed on an eminence, from whence he is exposed not only to the discourses and criticisms of men who now exist, but of all those who shall succeed them. If I am not deceived, you will be always spoken of, but in a very different manner, according to the variety of human opinion. But I am persuaded nothing can make you abandon so glorious a cause. The edifice that you raise will be solid, and those who attempt to overthrow it will be overthrown themselves. I approve your method of preserving minutes of your letters, that you may avoid all contradiction in what you are saying, and what you



have said. Write as if all the world were to read.

‘Adieu! deliverer of Rome.’

Rienzi sent this answer to Petrarch:

‘Nicholas, severe and clement, tribune of liberty, peace, and justice, and the illustrious deliverer of the sacred republic of Rome, to the noble and virtuous signior Francis Petrarch, worthily crowned poet, and our very dear fellow-citizen, health, honor, and perfect joy.

‘Your amiable letter, full of rhetorical flowers and just reasoning, has enchanted all those who have read or heard it. Your exhortations, founded on solid motives, and the examples of the greatest men of antiquity, delight and animate to virtue. We know you too well not to render justice to your prudence and goodness, or to doubt the sincerity of your sentiments for us, and for the city. We see clearly in your letter your attachment and your zeal for the good state of Rome. We love you, and so do all the Romans; and we wish we were able to contribute to your advancement and happiness. Would to God you were at Rome; your presence would decorate that city, as a precious stone adorns the ring of gold in which it is set. The soul of this peo-

ple is liberty, the sweetness of which they begin to taste.

‘ Things will naturally return to their former state. This city, after having suffered for several ages the most cruel bondage, beholds, praise be to God, its chains at present broken. There is no peril, no death, to which the Romans would not expose themselves, to preserve the precious good in which they now rejoice. Be persuaded that you will find us always ready to do every thing that can contribute to your satisfaction.

‘ Given in the capitol, where justice reigns, and where we live with uprightness of heart, the 28th of July, the first year of the deliverance of the republic.’

Rienzi after this wrote to the pope, that all he did was by the command of God, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. ‘ It would have been impossible for me,’ says he, ‘ to have reduced to submission the power of the greatest of tyrants, of princes, in so short a time, or even to have conceived the idea of so noble a work, but from a divine operation.’

Rienzi then informed the pope, that he had raised three hundred thousand florins in a tax on salt, which paid nothing before. This news would not have displeased a court where lux-



ury and magnificence rendered money so necessary, had not the tribune applied this augmentation of the revenue to supply the troops whom he held in pay for the maintenance of his own power, under the specious pretext of the public safety. In this letter he makes the strongest protestations of respect, attachment, and obedience, to the pope, whom he acknowledges for his sovereign. Whenever he speaks of the city of Rome, or the Roman people, he says always, 'your city; your people.' It is to this letter Petrarch alludes when he praises the style and sentiments of Rienzi, who covered, under this artful veil of submission, his usurpation of the pope's authority.

Petrarch passed the month of September at Avignon. The ninth of that month he obtained letters of legitimation for his son John, who was about ten years of age. He is called in these letters a scholar of Florence, and qualified by them to possess any benefice without the necessity of mentioning this blot on his birth, or the dispensation obtained from the pope. We see by these letters that the mother of John was not a married woman, which justifies Petrarch from adultery.

Nothing was now talked of at Avignon but the follies of Rienzi: with his increase of power

and success, he became vain and insolent: his head was not strong enough to bear so quick a rise from the moderate to the most elevated fortune: he was blinded by power, intoxicated with wealth, and passed all at once from the greatest simplicity to an excess of magnificence and ostentation little suited to his former declarations, and the part he had undertaken to support: he affected the airs of a sovereign, an extreme luxury in his clothes and in his furniture; and his table was covered with dainties sought from distant climates, and the most rare and exquisite wines. His wife, who was young and handsome, never appeared in the streets without the most splendid train: a chosen band of youths formed her guard; ladies of the first quality attended her; and young damsels walked before her, fanning off the flies, and cooling the air. All the relations of Rienzi forgot their original, and imitated this parade. His uncle, who was brought up a barber, never walked abroad without a cavalcade of the principal citizens. To complete all, Rienzi took it into his head he would be made a knight, without reflecting that this affected title of nobility clashed with his oath as tribune; and he gave orders that the pomp of this ceremony should equal the triumphs of an-



cient Rome. No spectacle before was ever more sumptuous: it drew to Rome an incredible multitude of spectators, who confessed nothing equal to it had ever been seen; and, above all, they admired the order that reigned through the whole. It was a custom for those who would be made knights to bathe themselves the preceding evening. Rienzi, who would do every thing in a new manner, took it into his head to bathe himself in a basin of porphyry in the church of St. John de Lateran, in which it was thought the emperor Constantine bathed after being cured of his leprosy by pope Sylvester: he would have his bed also placed in that part of the church surrounded with columns of St. John. As he was stepping into this bed, a circumstance happened which appeared ominous. The bed, though new, sunk under him. The day after he was made knight, he went to hear mass in the chapel of pope Boniface, seated upon a throne surrounded with all the nobility of Rome. They observed in this mass the solemnities used at the consecration of kings. In the midst of these sacred mysteries, Rienzi advanced toward the people, and said, with a loud voice, 'We cite to our tribunal, Lewis, duke of Bavaria, and Charles, king of Bohemia, to judge of their

pretensions to the empire ; and the princes, who call themselves electors, to produce the titles of their right to such election, which, as I find in the archives, belongs to the people of Rome.' The pope's vicar, who was present, and did not expect such an extravagance as this, remained for a time confounded ; but, recollecting himself, he thought it his duty to make his protestations against it by a notary. While they were reading them, the tribune ordered the instruments to sound, that they might not be heard. Fifteen days after this Rienzi was crowned again with seven crowns, and with the same pomp, in the church of St. John de Lateran. These seven crowns were allusions to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. When these feasts were over, the peoples' eyes were opened, and they reflected with concern on the profanation of the churches, the insolent citation of the emperors and electors, and the insupportable pride and luxury of Rienzi and his relations.

Petrarch was at Avignon while these things passed ; and he either did not hear of them ; or his enthusiasm for the liberty of Rome, the period of which he flattered himself was hastening under the government of Rienzi, did not suffer him to believe them. He was engaged also at this time in the news received from the king-



dom of Naples, which was in great commotion.

Lewis, king of Hungary, was determined to pursue and punish the murderers of his brother. Clement VI. fulminated against them the most terrible bulls, and appointed Bertrand de Bouze, great justiciary of the kingdom, to proceed openly against them: but in private letters he ordered him to keep secret the informations he should gain, that, in case the queen, or the princes of the blood, should be found guilty, he might acquaint the pope, who should reserve to himself their judgment, to save the troubles it might cause to that kingdom. The greatest part of those guilty were discovered and punished. Queen Joan could not save the three principal persons, the Catanese, Robert de Cabones, Soncia, and their cabal. They gave them the torture in a place by the sea, in sight of all the people; but a rail prevented their depositions being heard. The Catanese could not support the agonies of the torture; she died before she got to the place of execution. Robert and Soncia had their flesh torn off with red-hot irons; they had put gags in their mouths to prevent their speaking. This was not enough to satisfy the king of Hungary. He considered the

queen, and the two princes, who were his cousins, as the real authors of his brother's murder; and, finding that neither the pope nor the tribune would act in this affair, he determined to transport himself with an army to Naples. To impress the more terror, he had a black standard carried before him, on which was painted the strangled figure of his brother Andrew. He sent a natural brother of his before him to besiege the city of Sulmone. Petrarch was still at Avignon, when he was informed that the Hungarians had entered Italy, and were set down before Sulmone. This made him very uneasy for the fate of his friend Barbatus, who resided at Sulmone since the death of king Robert; and he wrote him the following letter:

‘In the midst of the cares which overwhelm me, your situation is my greatest uneasiness. I love no one more than my dear Barbatus; I feel this strongly at present. Love is credulous, timid, and restless; it fears every thing. What I long predicted is now come to pass. I always said a crime so horrid could not remain unpunished: But what have the people of Italy done, who are going to be the victim? God, who revenges the guilty, will not punish the innocent. But I need not fear for Italy. The



rebels, on the contrary, will be treated as they merit, while the tribunal now established shall be in vigor. My apprehensions are for Naples, that queen of cities, and Capua, formerly so powerful. Torrents from the shores of the Danube are coming down on that flourishing country. A tempest from the north always covers it with thick clouds. I learn hostilities are begun, and that Sulmone, your country, and the country also of Ovid, is to be the first victim. What would Ovid say, if he was to behold the Barbarians he despised and hated, govern that city which gave him birth? Would it not have been better that his bones had been covered with their earth, than his monument insulted in the middle of his country? But grief makes me wander: I tremble for you. I do not see wherein I can succour you; but sometimes more can be done than is perceived. Command me as you have a right: I have some influence with the Roman people and the tribune. If I can be of any use to you with them, dispose of my mind and of my pen; both the one and the other are at your service.

‘I have a house in a distant and tranquil corner of Italy: it is small, but large enough for two persons who have only one heart and

one foul. Riches and poverty are both banished from this mansion, and the door of it is shut against licentiousness: it is filled with good books, and wants my presence: I have been absent from it two years. Come, and seek in it an asylum. Whatever happens, I shall never be easy till I know your life to be in safety.'

Petrarch thought of quitting Avignon again, and returning to Italy. 'I am prevented,' says he, 'by my old comrades, who would drag me for ever to assemblies. In vain I tell them such places no longer amuse me: a thousand paths of ambition or avarice are pointed out to me. When I say I am content with my lot, and desire nothing beyond it, they maintain that I am playing a farce. I cannot even obtain from my taylor that my clothes should be wider, or from my shoe-maker an easy pair of shoes. I find but one remedy for all my evils; a little corner of the earth, where I may live as I please, and be no longer what I have been. Change of air is of use to the sick: ingrafting softens the sap of the tree; roots are perfected by transplanting; and, I think, contrary to the opinion of the world, we ought not to become old where we have been young.' The love of his country, and his dislike to Avignon, were the motives which induced Petrarch to return



to Italy, and balanced in his heart his love for Laura. All the lords of Italy had wrote to desire he would come among them; and, among these, James de Carrore, who was become governor of Padua, a man of great merit, invited Petrarch in the most obliging manner to come and settle at Padua.

Lewis of Gonzague, the lord of Mantua, had sent also to Petrarch a man in his confidence, with a sum of money, to engage him to come to him at Mantua; to whom Petrarch wrote this answer:

‘I would have brought you my thanks for your letter, but it is not in my power. I grow old in this place, and am the sport of Fortune. I return your money by Peter de Creme, your gentleman, because I am not at liberty to comply with your desire. I am hastening to my goal, unable to bear the fatigues of a long journey. My soul, wounded by love, cannot tear itself from Avignon. Was I to come to you, so far from being of any use, I should be only a burden. Frequent indispositions, and an habitual melancholy, require relief from others, and allow not the attention necessary for a courtier. However, you may chance to see me in the spring, if cardinal Colonna will permit. In the mean time, let not your benefits go be-

yond my wishes or deserts: your generosity would not justify your imprudence.'

Petrarch had friends at Florence, who invited him to return to his country, and gave him hopes that the estate of his family, which had been confiscated when his father was exiled, would be restored to him again. He had left his son John at Verona; and he wished to see him, and judge of the progress he had made in his studies: he was now above ten years of age, and his education became very interesting to Petrarch. Though Rienzi had lost much of his glory, Petrarch was not entirely cured of his enthusiasm towards him; and he had even thoughts of going to Rome, to encourage him in his pursuit of liberty. All these motives united, having determined Petrarch to quit France, and settle in Italy, he went to communicate his design to the pope, and to know his commands.

Clement loved Petrarch. He looked upon him as an ornament to his court, and wished to fix him there. He had offered him, with this view, several considerable benefices, which he had always refused, saying, he was not worthy of them: and the pope had condescended so far as to entreat him earnestly to accept them. But it was to no purpose; Petrarch would



take no employment which should deprive him of liberty.

‘ You refuse all my offers,’ said the pope. ‘ Ask what you will, and you shall obtain it.’

‘ Holy father,’ replied Petrarch, ‘ since you are determined to serve me, I resign myself to your pleasure, and leave it to you to choose for me. You know better than I do what will suit my disposition and your liberality. When any place of that kind shall become vacant, vouchsafe to remember your servant.’

This constant refusal of all the dignities offered him will appear to many persons incredible. But a letter he wrote to Socrates, from whom he hid no secret of his heart, proves the truth of this beyond a doubt.

‘ I continue unshaken in my resolution. Whether it is modesty or meanness, or whether it is courage and strength of mind, as some persons of merit have thought, I have never desired a great fortune. All the world knows this; and you can witness it more perfectly than any one. You have sometimes praised, and sometimes blamed, me for it, according to circumstances. You have said to me, “ Do not you fear that your firmness will be esteemed obstinacy?” I have not yet, however, repented my conduct. Every elevated situation

is a suspicious one; there is a fall beneath it. If I am indulged with that mediocrity preferable to gold, of which Horace speaks, and which has been promised me, I will accept it with pleasure and gratitude. But if they will give me a heavy charge, I will persist in refusing it, and shake off the yoke. I prefer poverty to slavery; but I need not fear the former as things go at present. You are fully informed of my determination; speak of it to our friends, and to the lord of lords, when you shall find occasion. I have never hid my thoughts; but there are people who must be told the same thing often to understand it. Your eloquence will reach them. One speaks with more force, and is listened to more favorably, for a friend than for oneself. Make them feel that true liberality is neither slow, crabbed, nor unwilling, and thinks only of the person it would oblige; and that it bends to their desires, instead of limiting them. The offer of treasures to a man who asks a small sum is a decent method of refusing him.'

The moderation of Petrarch was not greater than the bounty and condescension of the pope. He must have heard his declamations against the court of Avignon, and free expressions concerning himself, and the interest he



took in the enterprize of Rienzi for the Roman liberty. It must be owned that Clement deserved the name he bore.

Petrarch spent a good part of the autumn at Vacluse, to prepare for his departure to Italy, and to re-establish his health, which had been much disordered.

Before he left Avignon, he went to take leave of Laura. He found her at an assembly she often frequented. 'She was seated,' says he, 'in the midst of those ladies who are her general companions, and appeared like a beautiful rose in a parterre, surrounded with flowers smaller and less blooming. Her air was more touching than usual. She was dressed perfectly plain, and without pearls, garlands, or any gay colors. Though she was not melancholy, she did not appear with her usual cheerfulness. She was serious and thoughtful. She did not sing as usual, nor speak with that sweetness which charmed every one. She had the air of a person who fears an evil not yet arrived. In taking leave, I sought in her looks a consolation for my own sufferings. Her eyes had an expression I had never seen before in them. I deposited to their keeping my heart and my thoughts, as to faithful friends on whom I could with safety depend. Her al-





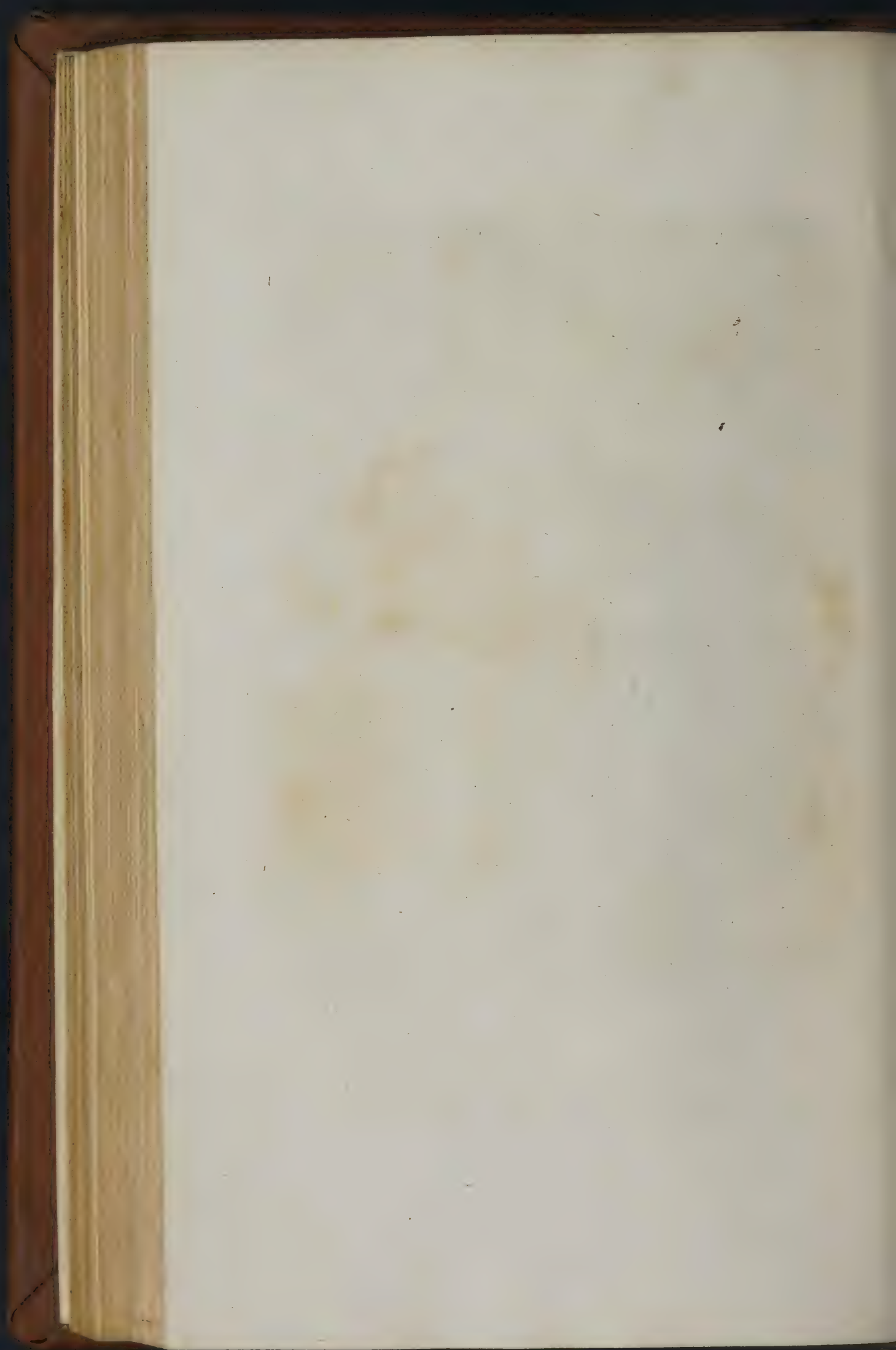
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*Petrarch's last interview with Laura.*

Published by Verner and Wood in Pall-mall, July 11 1797.





tered cloaths and air, her countenance, a certain concern mixed with grief, which I saw in her face, predicted the sorrows that threatened me.'

When Petrarch saw Laura in this situation he could hardly restrain his tears. Laura knew not how to bear a separation from this friend of her heart, whom she was to lose, perhaps, for ever. When the hour of this separation came, she cast upon him a look so soft, tender, and pure, that he confesses he had never been so touched before. 'Must I never,' says Petrarch, 'never see again that beautiful face, those kind looks which relieve the tender heart?'

While these were passing at Avignon, and Petrarch was re-establishing his health at Vaucluse, Rienzi no longer kept any measures with the court of Rome. Intoxicated more and more, he undertook to exterminate the great lords of Rome. Some historians say he bribed a person to assassinate them, who afterwards avowed the plot. However this was, he invited a great number of them to dine with him, under the pretence of asking their advice; and had some of them taken by force, and put into the capitol prisons. Among these were old Stephen Colonna, and John, his grandson; Peter Agapit Colonna, the Ursines, and other great



barons of Rome. They passed the night in agonies, uncertain what would be the fate prepared for them. Old Stephen, shut up in an empty hall, where there was no bed, walked backward and forward with a quick step all night, knocking often, and beseeching the guard, in vain, either to open the door or to kill him. What a night for such a hero! who, after having escaped a glorious death in battle, sees himself on the point of ending his days by the scrivener and the hangman!

The next day the tribune had the bell of the capitol sounded, which assembled the people. The great hall was hung with red and white silk, the common signal of Rienzi's executions.

He sent to each baron a cordelier, to confess and give them the sacrament. Their consternation was so extreme, when they found the tribune had condemned them to death, and that they must prepare for it, that they lost the power of speech. The greatest part of them, however, submitted, and received the communion; but Stephen Colonna refused, saying, he was not in a proper situation. Some Romans, however, persuaded Rienzi not to put these nobles to death. He brought them, therefore, before the people, and mounting the tri-

bunal, said it was owing to the favor of the people, to whom he made them bow, and swear future fidelity. The next day he made them dine with him, and loaded them with presents; and after dinner they attended him as in cavalcade through the streets of Rome.

When these nobles were at liberty, they retired into their castles, and meditated the means of revenge. The people, who revolted against Rienzi's proceedings, joined by degrees with these lords, and promised to let them into the town when a proper occasion should offer; for Rienzi, having heard of the revolt, had ordered the gates to be shut. In a too precipitate attempt to force an entrance, young John Colonna, not followed, as he imagined, by his party, was pulled off his horse, and had a sword plunged three times into his breast, so that he died upon the spot. His birth, youth, and beauty, could not touch these barbarians. This was the youth who received Petrarch at Palestrina, and was newly married to a very amiable and beautiful woman. He was only twenty years of age. Stephen Colonna, his father, who was at the head of the rear-guard, being come to the gate of the city, and seeing the populace assembled, as if he had a presentiment of his misfortune, asked where his



son was. As no one replied, he pushed his horse under the gateway, where, by the side of the wall, lay the body of this young man so dear to him, covered over with blood. Seized with horror at this mournful sight, he turned about in haste, and was going away; but paternal tenderness brought him back again, to see if his son had any remains of life. Perceiving him without motion, trembling with grief and rage, he was returning, when an enormous machine fell upon him from a tower, and he was surrounded by the enemy, who pierced him with wounds. Encouraged by the death of these two persons, they came out of the city without order, and fell upon the troops who were filing off. Peter Agapit Colonna was their next victim. He had fallen from his horse, and sought his safety in flight; but the rain, which had made the ground slippery, and the weight of his arms, which he wore for the first time, were great hindrances to his design, and he was taken among some vines under which he lay concealed. His prayers and tears could not save his life; they massacred him in cold blood. Two others of this family perished on this fatal day.

The tribune went to the church of St. Mary to thank God for this success, and, alluding to

the death of the Colonnas, he said, ' I have this day cut off an ear which neither the pope nor emperor was ever able to accomplish.' The bodies of the Colonnas were carried to the church of the monastery of St. Mary d'Ara Celi, wherein was their chapel. That of Stephen was so disfigured, it could not have been known, but for some signs of life still remaining. Several ladies, related to them, ran in grief to the chapel, to pay their last duty, and attend their funeral rites. Rienzi ordered his guards to drive them out of the church, and would not allow these illustrious persons any obsequies: he even threatened to have their bodies dragged to the place allotted for those of malefactors. This obliged them to convey them secretly to the church of St. Sylvester; and the nuns of that house (which was founded by the Colonnas for those relations who chose to take the veil) buried them there without the usual rites.

When old Stephen Colonna, who was more than fourscore and ten years old, was informed of these dreadful losses, he did not shed a tear, or suffer a sigh to escape him: he only said, with his eyes fixed on the earth, ' The will of God be done. Is it not better to die, than groan under the yoke of a madman?'



It is Petrarch that relates this, to whom we will now return.

He set out from Vacluse the 20th of November, 1347, leaving his friend Socrates in his little house. Their separation was extremely affecting. Petrarch took the road to Genoa, because it was the nearest way to Florence, where some friends waited for him. The evening before his departure he received a letter from Lelius, who informed him of the news received at Avignon concerning Rienzi's misconduct and follies. At a town where he stopped before he reached Genoa, Petrarch returned this answer to Lelius:

‘I am so fatigued, I cannot write you a long letter. This is the third night I have passed without sleep. My employments, and the bustle of removing, have scarcely suffered me to breathe. My rest will never be composed, till I can bring my mind to see every thing with an equal eye. I am now far upon my road. Nothing is so painful as a long deliberation on the conduct we shall pursue. On the contrary, nothing is more delightful than the state of that soul which, after having been long restless and uneasy, is come at last to a fixed determination. *The end of doubt is the beginning of repose.*

‘ It was a thunder-stroke to me to receive your account of the tribune. I have nothing to reply. I feel the destiny of my country: on whatever side I turn there is cause to mourn. Rome torn to pieces, Italy disfigured: what will become of me in these public disorders? Others may contribute their strength, their riches, their power, or their counsel; I can offer nothing but my tears.’

When Petrarch arrived at Genoa, he wrote a letter to Rienzi, reproaching him with his change of conduct:

‘ I have often applied to you the words of Scipio Africanus in Cicero, “ Who is it that flatters my ears with such agreeable news?” Oblige me not to say at present, Who is it wounds my ears by such unhappy rumors? You alone can tarnish the lustre of your reputation; the foundation of your glory can only be destroyed by yourself. You know the path you have taken to rise; it is by the opposite path you must fall. You are not ignorant that it is more easy to incur the one than to accomplish the other. You had arrived at the summit of virtue and glory; stand firm, and suffer not your enemies to exult, or your friends to grieve, at your destruction. It is not easy long to preserve a great reputation. I wrote



an ode in your praise; constrain me not to place a satire in its room. I should not address you thus without good reason. But I learn things that oblige me to change my opinion concerning you, and that force me to say what Cicero said to Brutus, "I blush for you! You was the protector and support of the good; you are now becoming the chief of vagabonds." What a sudden, what an unforeseen change! God is incensed against us! What is become of the good genius which inspired you? or, to speak the language of the people, that familiar spirit with whom you had so many secret conversations, and who enabled you to do things above the strength of man? But about what am I tormenting myself? I cannot over-rule the destinies: the things of this world will be determined by the decrees of the Eternal. God grant, however, I may not live to see this change.

'I was hastening to you; but I shall change my route. Rome, dear country, adieu! I shall see you no more. I would sooner go to the furthest east, if what I have learned is true. But ought I to believe it? Is it possible that so good a beginning should be followed by so bad an end? Ah! would to Heaven I may have been deceived: with what pleasure should I

retract my error! You see I seek to solace my grief by doubt: was it not for this, I should speak to you with still more severity. Falsehood is become a common and a venial sin; but nothing can expiate his crime who betrays his country. If you regard not your own reputation, (which I can scarcely believe,) have yet some consideration for mine. You see what a storm threatens, what a crowd of censurers are gathering round me: be again yourself while you may; examine what you have been; what you are; from whence you arose; whither your actions tend; what are the offices you should fill up; and you will find that you are the minister, not the master, of the republic.'

Instead of going to Florence, as Petrarch intended, he went to Parma: there he received the account of the dreadful catastrophe that had befallen the house of the Colonnas. We do not readily believe afflicting news; but when he saw the letters that confirmed it, he was overwhelmed with grief. He had ever a tender friendship for young Stephen, and compared him to Marcellus, the grandson of Augustus, whom Virgil has so finely praised, and who was the delight of the Romans. He wrote on this occasion a long letter to cardinal



Colonna, in the style of Seneca, full of dry sentences and perplexed periods, according to the fashion of those times for letters of condolence. News was now brought to Parma, that the tribune, abandoning himself to all kinds of injustice, the people rose against him, and hung him up in effigy on the walls of his palace. He went from Rome to Naples to seek the protection of the king of Hungary: his wife escaped in the habit of a nun, and went to him there. The terror of him was so great, that the lords, who were absent from Rome in their own castles, did not venture, till three days were passed after his departure, to return again into the city.

1348. Petrarch went in January to Verona, where his friends and his son impatiently expected him. On the twenty-fifth day of this month, being in his library, he felt the ground tremble under him, and heard a hollow noise: the walls shook, and the books were thrown from the shelves. He went out of his room terribly alarmed, and saw his servants, and the people of Verona, running here and there in the greatest consternation. They cried out aloud, persuaded that the world was at an end. All contemporary historians speak of this earthquake; they agree that it began in the Alps.

It did great mischief at Pisa, Bologna, Padua, and Venice, but still more in Tyrol and Bavaria, where whole towns were buried in ruins. More than sixty villages in one canton were destroyed by the fall of two mountains. A comet preceded, and the plague came after this dreadful earthquake. It is generally agreed that the plague came originally from Cathoy (so they then called China) and from Tartary: in the space of a year it desolated Asia; from Asia it passed to Africa, where it made great havock. It was reported of Albachefer, who was lord of almost all Barbary, that being on a journey to look at a road which he was making through the deserts of Babylon to pass to the Indies, they came to inform him the plague was in his kingdom, that fourscore of his wives were already dead of it, and a great number of his courtiers. The idea struck him, that this plague was a punishment from Heaven because he was not a Christian; and he sent his admiral to notify it throughout his kingdom that he would be baptized. A little after this an European vessel landing on his coast, he asked what was the condition of the Christian world? They told him that the plague destroyed a great many; and he altered his mind about baptism, when he found that Christians died as



well as Saracens. The contagion was brought into Europe by some Genoese and Catalonian merchants, who came from Syria, and traded to the Indies: they disembarked with their infected merchandise in Sicily, and from thence at Pisa and Genoa, from whence the mortality spread all over Europe. From Marseilles and Catalonia it came into Spain and France; and in 1348 and 1349 it ravaged the borders of the ocean and the islands. In 1350 it extended to Germany and all the north; so that in three years it spread universally.

Since the deluge, history furnishes no example of so dreadful a scourge. Various, but chimerical, have been the causes to which it was ascribed, as from fire coming out of the earth, from whence issued a corruption that infected the air, and insects rained from heaven. 'And some ascribed it to the operation of the heavenly bodies,' says Boccace, 'when they ought to have imputed it to the anger of God for our enormous iniquities.' With some it began by bleeding at the nose, a sign of inevitable death: with others, by swellings of the size of an egg or apple under their arms, which soon after mortified, and dispersed over the body in black or blue spots. Few lived beyond the third day; some died on the first, commonly without

any fever. It proved beyond the art of the wisest physician to cure this desperate malady. In France and Germany, where the Jews were mortally hated, they accused them of having poisoned the fountains, and some of them of having gone to the Indies on purpose to bring the plague to the Christians, and they were cruelly persecuted on this account. Some suspected the poor eunuchs, and others the nobles, of this evil. Clement VI. whose understanding and knowledge raised him above all vulgar prejudices, and particularly those of that age, took the part of the Jews with great warmth; and he published two bulls, by which, after vindicating them from this enormous crime, he forbade any one to persecute, or force them to be baptized.

When Petrarch returned to Parma, in March, 1348, this contagion was got into Italy, but not spread far. He brought with him his son John, to place him under Gilbert de Parme, an excellent grammarian, and to have him under his own eye.

Luchin Viscompti, lord of Milan, and who had obtained the lordship of Parma, wrote a very obliging letter at this time to Petrarch. He was valiant, and governed his states with wisdom. It appears that he was the most



powerful lord in Italy, and even in Europe. He reigned over seventeen great cities, and had always in pay four or five thousand troopers. His nephews, and some of the Milanese nobles, having conspired against him, it had alarmed him so much, that he had always two mastiff dogs to follow him, who, at the least sign from their master, devoured those he pointed to; and they always slept at the door of his chamber. His wife was of the illustrious family of Fiesque. She was the most beautiful woman of her age. Her love of dress and pleasure was extreme; but she had not that modesty which heightens female charms. Proud of her rank, and fond of parade, she delighted in nothing but feasts and noisy diversions. Her love of intrigue was not for some time discovered by her husband, who prevented even her desires, by procuring her a succession of brilliant entertainments. And on a vow she had made to St. Mark, which she went to fulfil at Venice, he prepared the ceremony for her; and she embarked upon the Po, with a train of ships ornamented in so superb a manner, that it resembled the navigation of Cleopatra to meet Anthony. The handsomest lords and ladies of the court attended her. After traversing the states near the Po, she passed Mantua, Verona, and Padua.

They paid her the greatest honors every where.

It is easy to imagine what must result from such a medley of persons of both sexes, governed by a princess of so much gallantry. Isabella kept no bounds; and most of her ladies followed her example; so that this was called the voluptuous navigation. Those ladies who were more prudent than the rest, revealed, on their return, the most secret anecdotes of this expedition; and the husbands had nothing to do but to console each other. Luchin Visconti was not the last informed of his wife's amours with Gonzague, the lord of Mantua, and Dondoli, the doge of Venice. He was more affected with this account than so great a man ought to have been; and, though he was so fond of his wife, he resolved to get rid of her, and exterminate the house of Gonzague. He was naturally melancholy, and became more gloomy than usual. He was often seen with his brow bent, his looks wild, and biting his nails. Isabella, who soon perceived, by his outward manner, what passed within, prepared for him a slow poison. Such was his situation when Petrarch came to Parma; to which was added a body tormented by the gout, and by the poison which circulated in his veins.



This unfortunate prince sought consolation in the commerce of the Muses, and the innocent pleasures of his garden. When he heard of Petrarch's arrival in his state, he wrote to ask him for some plants from his garden, and some verses from his Muse, which flattered our poet, who returned the following answer.

‘ Your letter exceeds my hopes. I render thanks to fortune for the correspondence of a great prince, who is willing to forget the inequality between us. While my gardener is collecting the plants, my Muse shall produce the lines you ask for. The pleasure of serving you will render my labor easy. Your great soul, without ceasing, occupied in the most important affairs, will perhaps disdain such trifles. I know it is the manner of thinking in our age. But I know also that Cæsar and Augustus, those masters of the world, loved to repose in the bosom of the Muses, and preferred their soft sounds to that of drums and trumpets. I speak not of Nero; the name of that monster would sully my tongue, and chase away the Muses. The emperor Adrian was so devoted to them, that the approach of death did not prevent his composing; and even at the instant of separation between his soul and body, he produced some very fine verses.

‘ What shall I say of Antoninus, who obtained the empire by his merit, and would not quit the name of philosopher for the title of emperor, persuaded that the first was much superior to the last? Formerly letters were thought necessary, not only to be a king, but to be a man. Times are sadly changed, and kings now make war against letters.

‘ God forbid I should name the ignorant kings of this age. Pollio said, speaking of Augustus, “ It is not safe to write against those who can proscribe. We must attack the dead alone, they cannot forbid us.” As to me, I accuse in general, and name no particular person. But the princes I speak of copy the emperor Licinius, who said that letters were a public pest. Marius, though of a base origin, thought otherwise, and preferred the poets because they would celebrate his exploits. And where is the man so base as not to love glory? Glory is acquired by virtue, but preserved by letters. The memory fails, pictures are effaced, and statues are broken: letters alone are a durable treasure, which the people have taken from their princes, who have ceded to them the empire of wit. Wise men must therefore be sought from the people, and not from those



kings who, as a Roman emperor calls them, writing to a king of France, are only crowned asses. As for you, Sir, to whom nothing is wanting but the title of king, I hope every thing from you. If my verses should please you, you will find me more liberal of them than you may imagine, or my occupations seem to promise.'

In these verses Petrarch addresses himself to the trees from which suckers had been taken, in this manner:

'Happy trees! never forget the honor done you by a great prince, in demanding some branches from your stem. Who knows? Perhaps he will hereafter vouchsafe to gather with his kind hand the fruits these your children shall produce. All Italy admires and respects this prince. The Alps obey, the father Appennine labors for him. The Po, with its foamy waves, divides his rich estates, and, beholding on each side of their course crowned serpents on elevated towers, bend before their sovereign. His empire spreads over both seas. The transalpine kingdoms fear, and would have him for their master. He entraps crimes in his nets, and represses them by the rein of his laws. He has revived in Hesperia the golden

age, and made known at Milan the great art of the Romans, to pardon those who submit, and subdue all those who refuse submission.'

Luchin was of a severe character; but, excepting that blemish, a great prince, and worthy of the praises of Petrarch. He made excellent laws, and understood how to enforce the practice of them. He protected the people against the oppression of the great, pursued crimes with vigor, maintained plenty, and always carried on war out of his states. He had great virtues, and great faults. His commerce with Petrarch did not last long: He died a martyr to jealousy, and the poison his wife had given him, the 23d of January, 1349.

While Petrarch was at Parma, he meditated a journey to Padua, to visit James de Carrore, lord of that city, who had expressed so great a desire to see him. He was just got there, when he received a letter from his friend Socrates, which informed him of the arrival of a young Florentine, his relation, called Francischin, whose father was one of the greatest captains of his age. Francischin was a young man of an amiable heart: he was of a tender and affectionate temper, full of wit and poetic talents. He had presented himself to Petrarch



in 1345 as a relation and countryman. Petrarch became tenderly interested in him, and cultivated his taste for poetry. This young Florentine would never have quitted Petrarch, but from a strong desire to see Paris, and make the tour of France. This was the passion of all the Italians who had wit, and wished to cultivate it, and the Florentines above all others. Brunetto, Latini, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace, had set the fashion of this journey. When he left Avignon, he promised Petrarch that, if he was not there at his return, he would seek him wherever he should be. He kept his word, and inquired immediately on his arrival for his master: they told him he was in Italy; on which he instantly embarked at Marseilles, and got to Verona the 6th of April.

Petrarch set out for Parma to meet this dear friend; and wrote these lines to John Anchisee, a learned man in Florence, and the friend of Francischin:

‘I expect him every day. I have heard of him at Marseilles, where he arrived in good health. He flattered himself with seeing me at Avignon; and I would have waited for him, but I could no longer support that filthy court. He is a treasure I know you die with envy to possess: but be assured that, when I again lay

hold of him, I will hide him safe, for fear of losing him. A good friend is more rare and more precious than gold. We ought to pardon those who possess one, for being avaricious and jealous of him. However, I consent to share him with you; but upon one condition, that you come and enjoy him here with me. I wish that friendship may engage you to take the step I propose; you will be a gainer by it: instead of one, you will procure two friends. From the calm valley of the Parmesan.'

Petrarch was so impatient to see his dear Francischin, so fully persuaded he would arrive every moment, that, at the least noise which he heard, he quitted with precipitation his books and his pen, to go out and meet him. What was his grief, when he was told that this dear relation, having stopped at Savona, near Genoa, was dead of a sickness, either brought on by the fatigue of his journey, or by the contagion which began to spread over Italy! He left an aged father, a mother, brothers, and sisters, all inconsolable for his loss; for he was the delight of all his family. 'I feel,' said Petrarch, 'it would be my duty to go and console them; but how can I do this, being inconsolable myself?'

A few days after this, Petrarch received a



letter from Lancelot Angiosciola, a gentleman, a soldier, and a knight. His valor and his prudence gained him the love of the king of Bohemia, and many great lords of his time. One part of his letter is pleasant enough. He asks of Petrarch, who had been a martyr to love twenty years, a remedy for that passion.

‘How consoling is it for me,’ replies Petrarch, ‘to find you attacked with my old disease! It appears no longer unworthy of me, nor do I blush for it; but I look upon your application to me for a cure as a pleasantry indeed! Every remedy that can be proposed is only food for this passion: there is but one that our Æsculapius has discovered; but the simples of which it is composed are not in your garden, or are too bitter for your taste. The only secret I have found to prevent the evils of life, is to do nothing without having well examined beforehand in what we are going to embark. In most things we undertake, the beginnings are agreeable; they seduce us; but we should think of the end: they are paths strewn with flowers: where these paths lead to is the most important question.’

James de Castillonchio and Francis Bruni, two young men of cultivated understandings, sent letters to Petrarch, and with them an ora-

tion of Cicero, which he considered as a valuable present. They expressed a great desire to see his Africa. He answered, that his Africa withered for want of watering and culture, and that the plague had silenced his Muse. 'It takes my friends,' says he, 'and leaves me upon the earth. It is my fate at present to groan myself, and reprimand the lamentation of others.'

The plague began now to spread in Italy. The contagion, as I have said, defied the art of all medicine. Whether it was really incurable, or they were ignorant of the proper method of treating it, it communicated itself instantly to persons in full health, as the fire lays hold of dry and oily stuff which comes near it. It was caught by touching the clothes of those who had it, or any thing that had been brought near them; and it extended to animals as well as men. 'I saw,' says Boccace, from whom this and the former account is taken, 'two swine groping with their snouts in the rags of a poor man, who died of it, and they both expired soon after, as if they had taken the most subtle poison.' This dreadful calamity spread a universal consternation. Solemn processions were made to ask of God the cessation of this scourge; but, perceiving it made every day



further progress, some formed little societies, and shut themselves up in retired houses situated in a good air: There they eat only white meats, and drank the purest wine, avoiding all excess, having no communication with any out of the house; nor would they be informed of what was going on in public. Music, play, and some other innocent pleasures, were their only relaxation.

Others, on the contrary, looked upon it as an infallible preservative to give themselves up to pleasures without restraint. They passed the day and night in taverns, and in those houses where they could find most objects of voluptuousness. Nothing was easier than entrance at this time; for as death was hourly expected, every thing was abandoned. No one troubled themselves to shut their doors; and the first comer might take whatever he found without any one to oppose him. Persons of more refinement took the middle part, between the abstinence of the one and the licentiousness of the other. They used the things of this world with moderation: they did not confine themselves, but only took the precaution to wear aromatic shrubs and flowers, to preserve themselves from the infection the air was filled with from the sick and dead around them.

In fine, some there were who, as the greatest means of safety, chose a life contrary to humanity and the obligations to society: they quitted their relations and friends, and went wandering from place to place, where the contagion had not yet appeared: they vainly thought that God's wrath was limited to the city they had abandoned, and would not pursue them elsewhere. In all these various methods the plague took some, and left others. No remedy succeeded: the physicians understood nothing about it; and, which is most astonishing, they acknowledged they did not. All unions were dissolved: relations and friends were separated, and avoided one another: clownish servants did whatever was merely necessary, and sometimes nothing, for great salaries. The ladies of the first rank, the most beautiful and chaste, when attacked by this disease, finding no women who would attend them, took without scruple the first man who offered, whether young or old, sober or debauched, faithful or dishonest. The state of their disorder, and the necessity of assistance, did not permit the care that decency prescribed; and this freedom became afterwards a habit, and altered the manners of those formerly most respected for their delicacy. There were no fu-



neral rites observed: the dead were laid at the door of the house, or thrown out of the window: those whose office it was to inter them, piled them up without distinction on biers or tables, and carried them to the first church-yard without priest or prayers. Numbers died in their houses unknown to any one; the neighbours only discovered their death from the smell of the bodies, which they were careful to get removed for fear of the infection. This dreadful picture, drawn by Boccace, was descriptive of every city in Italy, except Milan, and the northern part of the Alps, where this contagion was hardly perceived.

We will now return again to Petrarch. It must be remembered that when he left Avignon, Laura was in a state that gave him great inquietude every time he thought of her, and that was continually. She was so much changed since that time, that no one would have known her. This, together with the plague, which took off many of his friends, was no doubt the cause of those dismal dreams and pre-sentiments which he was now haunted with. 'Formerly,' says Petrarch, 'when I had quitted Laura, I saw her often in my dreams. Her angelic vision then consoled me; but at present it afflicts and overwhelms me. I think I

see upon her face compassion mixed with grief. I think I hear her speak to me thus: "Recall that night when, forced to part from you, I left you bathed in tears. I was not able to tell you then, nor would I have done it; but I will tell you at present, and you may believe me, you shall see me no more upon earth." Oh! what a dreadful vision! And can it be true that the light is extinguished which gave me such sweet and consoling reflections? Shall I only learn from dreams an account so interesting to me? Shall she herself come to announce it? No; it cannot be: Heaven and nature forbid. I trust I shall again see that charming face, which is my support and joy, and the honor of our age. But if it is true that Laura has quitted her beautiful habitation to fly to heaven, let that day be the last of my life. Uncertain of my state, I sigh, I write, I fear, I hope; my sighs and my verses shall relieve my sorrow. Shall Love cease to send his darts to my afflicted heart? Shall my eyes never behold the light of my life? Shall they be condemned to everlasting tears? Alas! I know not what to think. Is Laura fled to heaven, which is her country, without reflecting that she leaves one upon earth who cannot live without her? This uncertainty agitates



me without ceasing. I am no longer what I was. I resemble a man who walks in a path he is not sure of. I open my ears, but I hear no one speak of her I love. I know not what to think, or what to say. My soul floats between fear and hope. Laura is more beautiful, more chaste, than all others. Perhaps God has taken her from earth to reward her in heaven. If it is so, my pleasures and my pains will soon be at an end with my life. Cruel departure! Why separate myself from her, if I was so soon to lose her?

The sixth of April, Petrarch being at Verona, on his way to Parma, always occupied with these black presages, which foretold the death of Laura, beheld her that morning in a dream, and they held a long conversation, the account of which from his own words is as follows:

‘Aurora had dispersed that thick darkness which renders the visions of night confused\*, and a blush of the softest crimson began to enlighten the east, when I saw a beautiful female advancing towards me. Her appearance was

\* Theocritus was of opinion that the dreams which came about the dawn of day were more distinct than those of the night. Horace thought otherwise: *Post mediam noctem visus cum somnia vera*, &c.





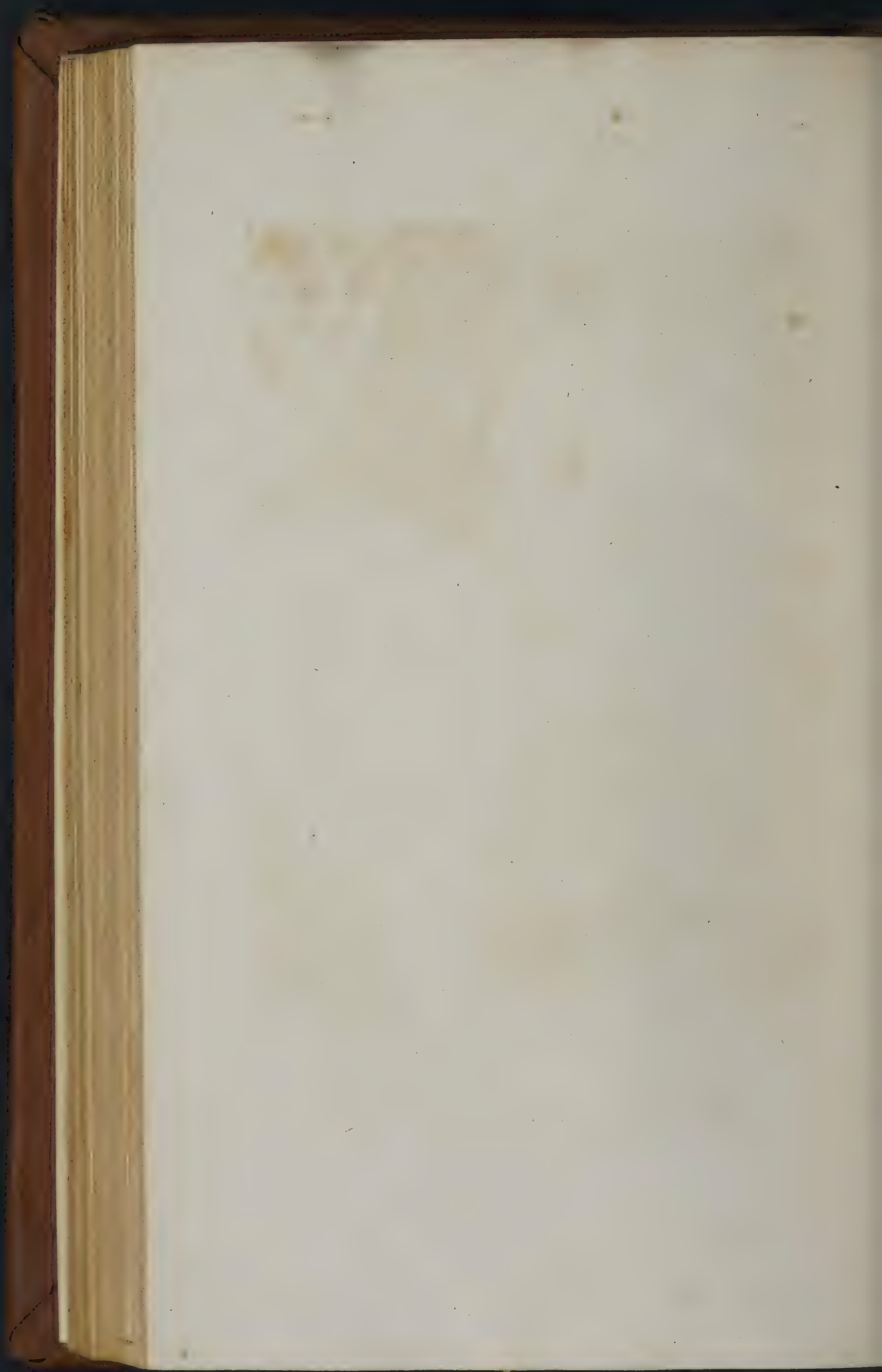
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*Petrarch's dream of Laura.*

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like that of the spring, and her head was crowned with oriental pearls. She had quitted a groupe of females crowned like herself; and, as she drew near to me, she sighed, and gave me a hand which had long been the object of my tenderest wishes.

‘ Her presence, and such an extraordinary mark of kindness, diffused through my soul an inexpressible pleasure. “Do you recollect her,” she said, “who, by engaging the affections of your youth, led you from the common road of life?” While she spoke these words, which were accompanied with an air of modesty and earnestness, she sat down under a laurel and a beech on the side of a brook, and commanded me to place myself by her. I obeyed.

“Not know you! my good angel!” I said, the tears flowing from my eyes. “But tell me quickly, I beseech you, whether you are in life, or in death?” “In life,” she replied. “’Tis you who are in death: and in death must you remain till the time shall come when you must quit this world. But we have much to say, and little time for our interview. The day is at hand. Be brief, therefore, and recollected.”

‘ On my expressing the most pungent grief to hear that she was no more, she said, “Petrarch! you will never be happy so long as



you continue to be governed by the prejudices of the world. My death, which is the cause of so much affliction, would be a source of happiness to you, could you but know the smallest part of my bliss." As she spoke these words, her eyes were lifted towards heaven, and filled with the tenderest emotions of gratitude. "To the spotless soul," continued she, "death is the deliverance from a darksome prison. It is an evil only to those who are wallowing in the mire of the world."

"But the tortures," I replied, "which barbarous tyrants, such as Nero, Caligula, Mezentius, &c. have inflicted, these exhibit death clothed with terrors." "It is not to be denied," she said, "that death is sometimes accompanied with severe pains. But remember, that the severest pains that can surround a death-bed are the fears of an eternal punishment. For if the soul can cast itself upon God, and place an entire confidence in him, death is no more than a sigh, or a short passage from one life to another."

[ ' I was overwhelmed with sorrow, and ready almost to sink under my distress, when I heard a low and mournful voice utter these words: *This poor mortal is attached to the present life. Yet he lives not, neither is he at peace*

*within himself. He is devoted to the world; and shall for ever remain the slave of this devotion. The world is the sole object of his thoughts, his words, and his writings.* I immediately recollected a voice which had so often been my consolation; and, on turning my eyes towards the place whence it came, I discovered our well-known friend. She was wont to appear sprightly and gay, now she was serious and grave.']

“In the flower of my youth,” pursued Laura, “when you loved me most, and when life was dressed out in all her charms, then was she bitter, compared with the sweetness of my death. I felt more joy at this moment than an exile returning to his wished-for country. There was but one thing which afflicted me; I was to leave you. I was moved with compassion.”

“Ah!” replied I, “in the name of that truth by which you was governed while on earth, and which you now more clearly distinguish in the bosom of Him to whom all things are present, tell me, I conjure you, whether love gave birth to this compassion? Those rigors mixed with softness, those tender angers, and those delicious reconciliations which were written in your eyes, have for ever kept my heart in doubt and uncertainty.”



‘ Scarce had I finished, when I beheld those heavenly smiles which have at all times been the messengers of peace. “You have ever,” she said, with a sigh, “possessed my heart, and shall continue to possess it. But I was obliged to temper the violence of your passion by the movements of my countenance. It was necessary to keep you in ignorance. A good mother is never more solicitous about her child than when she appears to be most in anger with him. How often have I said, ‘Petrarch does not love; he burns with a violent passion. I must endeavor to regulate it.’ But, alas! this was a difficult task for one whose fears and affections were likewise engaged.

“I said, ‘He must not be acquainted with the state of my heart. He admires so much what he sees without, I must conceal from him what passes within.’ This has been the only artifice which I have used. Be not offended. It was a bridle which was necessary to keep you in the right road. There was no other method by which I could preserve our souls. A thousand times has my countenance been lighted up with anger, while my heart has glowed with love; but it was my perpetual resolution, that reason, not love, should hold the sovereignty.

“When I saw you cast down with sorrow

and affliction, I gave you a look of consolation. When you were on the brink of despair, my looks were still more tender: I addressed you with a softer air, and soothed you with a kind word: my fears even altered the tone of my voice; you might see them marked on my countenance. When you looked pale, and your eyes were bathed in tears, I said, 'He is very ill; he will certainly die if I take not pity on him.' Then it was that you had every succour which virtue could give, and then was you restored to yourself again. Sometimes you were like the fiery horse, fretted by the spur; it was then necessary that you should feel the rein, and be managed with the bit. Such has been the innocent artifice by which I led you on, without the least stain to my honor."

"Ah!" said I, with a faltering voice, and eyes bedewed with tears, "such sentiments would be an ample recompense for all my sufferings, had I but courage to believe them."

"Faithless man!" she said a little angrily, "what motive can I have for this declaration, had it not been the true cause of that distance and reserve of which you have so often complained? In every thing else we were agreed; and honor and virtue were the bonds of our affection. Our love was mutual, at least from the



time I was convinced of your attachment. There was only this difference, that one of us discovered, while the other concealed, the flame. You were hoarse with crying out, 'Mercy! help!' while I opened not my mouth. Fear and modesty permitted me not to reveal my emotions. The flame, however, which is confined, burns more fiercely than that which is at liberty.

"Recollect the day when we were alone, and when you presented to me your sonnets, singing at the same time,

'This is all my love dares say.'

I received them with kindness; and, after such a proof, could there be the least doubt of my affection? Was not this taking off the veil? My heart was yours, but I chose to be mistress of my eyes. This you thought unjust; and yet with what right could you complain? Was you not possessed of the nobler part? Those eyes, which have so often been withdrawn because you merited this severity, have they not been restored to you a thousand times? Often have they looked upon you with tenderness, and would at all times have done so, had I not dreaded the extravagance of your passion.

“ But the morning is far advanced, the sun is emerging from the ocean, and it is with regret that I tell you we must be now separated. If you have any thing more to say, be expeditious, and regulate your words by the few moments which remain to us.” I had only time to add, “ My sufferings are fully recompensed; but I cannot live without you: I wish therefore to know whether I shall soon follow you.” She was already in motion to depart, when she said, “ If I am not mistaken, you shall remain a long time upon the earth.”

We may easily imagine the anxiety of Petrarch at these multiplied visions, which so positively foreboded the death of Laura, and the impatience with which he waited for news of her from Avignon. Unfortunately for him, the plague had stopped all communication, and the couriers could not pass without the greatest difficulty. At last, however, on the ninth of May, 1348, Petrarch being at Parma, received a letter from his dear Socrates, who informed him that Laura died of the plague the sixth of April. I will collect every circumstance relative to it that is to be found in the works of Petrarch.

Gui de Chaliac, physician and chaplain to the pope, who attended those who had the



plague, and gives a long account, tells us it began in Avignon in January, and that it lasted seven months: that in the first of these months it shewed itself by a continual fever, with spitting of blood; and that those whom it seized died generally on, or at the end of, the third day: that it was most violent in Lent; and that in the three days that preceded the fourth Sunday in Lent, there died at Avignon fourteen hundred persons. We owe this justice to the memory of Clement VI. that he spared neither his attention, care, or charity, to render this calamity less fatal at Avignon than it had been in other places. He gave pensions to physicians to attend the poor: he bought a field out of the city, which he destined to the burial of the infected: he gave considerable sums to those who removed and buried the dead; and he had the most regular police observed, to prevent the spreading of the contagion. ‘And he did more essential kindness than all this,’ says one of his historians: ‘he permitted all his clergy to give a general absolution in their parishes to those who died of this disease. As to himself, he followed the example of one of his predecessors in the same situation; he kept close in his apartment, and had very great fires.’ All the endeavors of

this good pope could not prevent the cruel ravages made by this contagion, which, if we may believe an historian of that time, carried off in the city of Avignon, in the space of three months, a hundred and twenty thousand souls. Gui de Chaliac was seized with it himself, but he survived it.

Laura felt the first attacks of it the 3d of April. She had the fever, with spitting of blood. As she was persuaded she should not live beyond the third day, she took the methods her piety and reason suggested to be immediately necessary. She received the sacraments, and made her will the same day; after which she waited for death without fear or regret. When she was at the point of death, her relations, her friends, her neighbours, gathered around her, though she was attacked with a malady which terrified all the world. It is a singular circumstance that so beautiful a person should be so beloved by her own sex. Nothing can be a higher eulogy on her character. Laura, seated on her bed, appeared quite tranquil: no hideous and threatening phantoms had power over her divine soul. Her companions, who stood round her bed, wept and sobbed aloud. 'We are going to lose a companion,' said they, 'who was the soul of our innocent



pleasures; a friend, who consoled us in our chagrins, and whose example was a living lesson. We lose all in losing her. Heaven takes her hence as a treasure of which we were not worthy.'

Though Laura was calm and serene, it cannot be doubted she was sensible of the grief expressed by her companions; but, entirely occupied with the state she was just going to enter, she reaped in silence the celestial fruits of her virtue. Her soul departed gently without struggle, like a lamp whose oil is wasted, which grows fainter and fainter, and is clear to the last. She had the air of a weary person who slumbers; and death had penetrated through all her veins, without disturbing the serenity of her countenance.

From the whole of her sentiments and character, we have no reason to believe this account exaggerated. For 'her road to heaven,' says Petrarch, 'was not to seek in death: she had long known and walked in all the paths that lead to it.'

She died about six in the morning, on the 6th of April, 1348. Her body was carried the same day at vespers to the church of the Minor Brothers, and interred in the chapel De la Croix. It was built by Hugues de Sade, her

husband, close to the chapel of St. Ann, which had been erected by his father. The body of Laura was found there with an Italian sonnet of Petrarch's in the year 1533; and it was then proved that the Laura of Petrarch, which some took it into their heads to doubt, was the same with Laura de Noves, wife of Hugues de Sade.

It appears, by the will of this lady, that, after several pious legacies, she made her husband her heir, to whom she had brought ten children; six boys and four girls. Her eldest son, Poulon, who was the architect of the Metropolitan church of Avignon, and made dean of that church by the bishop, died before Laura, in the twentieth year of his age. Angiere, her eldest daughter, married, in 1345, Bertrand Domicellus, lord of Bedarride. She had two thousand five hundred florins for her portion; a very considerable sum at that time. Her mother left her but one florin, probably on account of her ill conduct after marriage, which was such, that Clement VI. at the solicitation of her relations, commanded the nuns of St. Catharine d'Apt, on pain of excommunication, to receive her, and keep her shut up for the rest of her life. Audibert became dean of Notre Dame de Dons, where he was placed at twelve years old; and



afterwards provost of Toulouse. Ermeffenda was a nun in the convent of St. Laurence, and procuratrice of that convent. Hugues, or Hugonin, the third son, became the eldest by the death of Poulon, and the entrance of Audibert into the ecclesiastic state. From him descend the three branches of the house of Sade, established at Avignon and in Provence. Margerita, the third daughter, died before Laura. Gorcenete was twice married, and possessed the fortune of her sister Angiere, who made it over to her. Her second husband was Bernard Ancezuine de Caderouffe, of one of the first houses in Provence; and she was married a third time to Raimond de Moulfong, lord of Menamenes. Peter de Sade was canon of the Metropolitan church. Laura left him but one florin in her will. James and Jaanet, who died when young, and without issue, she left also but one florin each.

It is not wonderful that Laura should alter so early in life, with so many domestic sicknesses and cares, and the grief arising from the conduct of some of her children, particularly her eldest daughter, so delicate as she was on the point of honor herself. And if any of her other children behaved ill, as should appear from her leaving them only one florin, it must

have touched her very sensibly, after the care she took in their education, to inspire them with those sentiments her own heart was filled with. Add to this, she lost her eldest son, who appears to have been amiable, at a very trying period of her life, and some children when young, and had much unkindness to support in the behaviour of her husband.

Modesty was her peculiar characteristic; and it appears she was not puffed up with her birth, her beauty, or the fame she derived from the praises of Petrarch. She was not only magnificent, but elegant, in her dress, particularly in the ornaments of her head, and the manner of tying up her hair: and we have seen she wore a coronet of gold or silver; and sometimes, for variety, a garland of flowers, which she gathered herself in the fields. Petrarch speaks of two rich dresses she had: the one of purple, edged with azure, and embroidered with roses; the other enriched with gold and jewels. In the first he compares Laura to the phoenix, which naturalists describe with purple feathers, and a blue tail strewn over with roses. 'Some,' says he, 'place this bird in the mountains of Arabia; but 'tis flown to our climate.' It is doubtful whether Laura was fond of all this magnificence. It should seem she only conformed



to it to please her family, and support her rank; for Petrarch says of her, in one of his sonnets, that she despised all those vain nets in which mankind were taken captive.

‘Rank, pearls, rubies, and gold, you reject as a weight that depresses the mind; and even the rare gem of beauty is only pleasing to you when adorned by virtue, that treasure of treasures.’

She was extremely reserved in her behaviour towards the men; and this was necessary in the corrupt age in which she lived, and in a city where the most innocent actions were often ill interpreted. An old lady said one day to her, that life was preferable to honor. ‘What is it I hear?’ replied Laura with warmth: ‘Change the order if you please, and place honor before life: without it there is neither beauty nor happiness in the world. A woman who loses this precious treasure, is no better than a mummy; a vile corpse, which no one can behold without horror. A gnawing worm devours her continually, and her condition is a hundred times more wretched than that of the dead. The grief of Lucretia in this situation ought to have served instead of a poniard.’

A reserve so uniform and constant generally

renders people serious and rigid, and gives them an air of unpoliteness: but Laura was the contrary of all this; and Petrarch advises all her sex to observe Laura, to look at her eyes; and learn from her how they may unite gaiety, politeness, grace, and the air of fashion, with wisdom and the principles of religion. ‘Imitate,’ says he, ‘if you can, her language and her manners. When she speaks, her eloquence and modesty enchant every heart: when she is silent, her looks charm and instruct: but do not attempt to vie with her in person. Her eyes, her features, are a present of nature, which art will never be able to attain.’

The education of Laura seems to have been like that of other ladies of her age; they were taught to sew and spin, but very rarely to read or to write. Those who knew how to read were called learned ladies, and were much sought, and in high esteem, when they were met with, which was generally in convents. We find that Petrarch always praises the understanding and goodness of Laura, but never speaks of its having been adorned with cultivation: ‘That her words had the dignity of nature, which raised her above her education; and that her voice was a source of continual enchantment, soft, angelic, and divine; that it



could appease the wrath, dissipate the clouds, and calm the tempests of the soul.' An elevated turn of mind supplied the advantages of a liberal education, and her sweetness of temper won upon every heart. How touching is it to view this amiable woman sinking under distresses from an unhappy marriage, from imprudent children, and inwardly pining at heart with an attachment that in a state of liberty would have been her felicity and glory, continually to behold the object of this affection a prey to the agonizing sensations of this fatal and tyrannic passion! Nothing was more simple than the life of Laura, occupied in the education of her children and her domestic cares. She went out only to perform the duties of society, or to enjoy the benefit of the air with the companions of her walks. In the suburbs of the Cordeliers there was a little house, built in the Gothic style, with one window to the south, and another to the north, and a stone seat before the door, which was called the House of Madam Laura. She used sometimes to sit here alone with a pensive air, musing and talking to herself. In the heat of summer it was a custom anciently at Avignon, for the greatest people to sit out at their doors for the benefit of the fresh air. She sometimes ap-

peared at sun-rise at the window. What a felicity for Petrarch when he happened to pass that spot! 'I rise,' says he, 'at break of day, to salute Aurora, the sun that follows her, and, above all, that other sun which has dazzled me from my tender youth, and has every day the same bright effect on my heart. Other lovers desire the shades of evening, and hate Aurora: but it is quite the contrary with me; my pleasures are suspended till night folds up her shades.' It appears that Sennucio, the friend of Petrarch, lived in the neighbourhood of Laura, and that Petrarch had desired he would inform him when Laura appeared at the window, which she often did at sun-rise.

Such was the beautiful, the amiable Laura. I know of no character, however illustrious, that has been done so much justice to as Laura's by the pen of Petrarch, who yet always declares his praises little equal to her worth. I will not undertake to express the grief of Petrarch on this event. 'I dare not think of my condition,' says he, 'much less can I speak of it.' He lived several days without eating or drinking, nourishing himself with his tears.

It was the custom formerly to write down in a book they read the most frequently, the thing they wished to retrace. On the manuscript of



Virgil I have mentioned, ornamented with paintings by Simon de Sienna, which was Petrarch's favorite book, he wrote these lines:

‘ Laura, illustrious by her own virtues, and long celebrated in my verses, appeared to my eyes for the first time the 6th of April, 1327, at Avignon, in the church of St. Clair, at the first hour of the day. I was then in my youth. In the same city, on the same day, and at the same hour, in the year 1348, this luminary disappeared from our world. I was then at Verona, ignorant of my wretched situation. That chaste and beautiful body was buried the same day after vespers in the church of the Cordeliers. Her soul returned to its native mansion in heaven. To retrace the melancholy remembrance of this great loss, I have written it, with a pleasure mixed with bitterness, in a book I often refer to. This loss convinces me there is no longer any thing worth living for. Since the strongest cord of my life is broken, with the grace of God, I shall easily renounce a world where my cares have been deceitful, and my hopes vain and perishing.’

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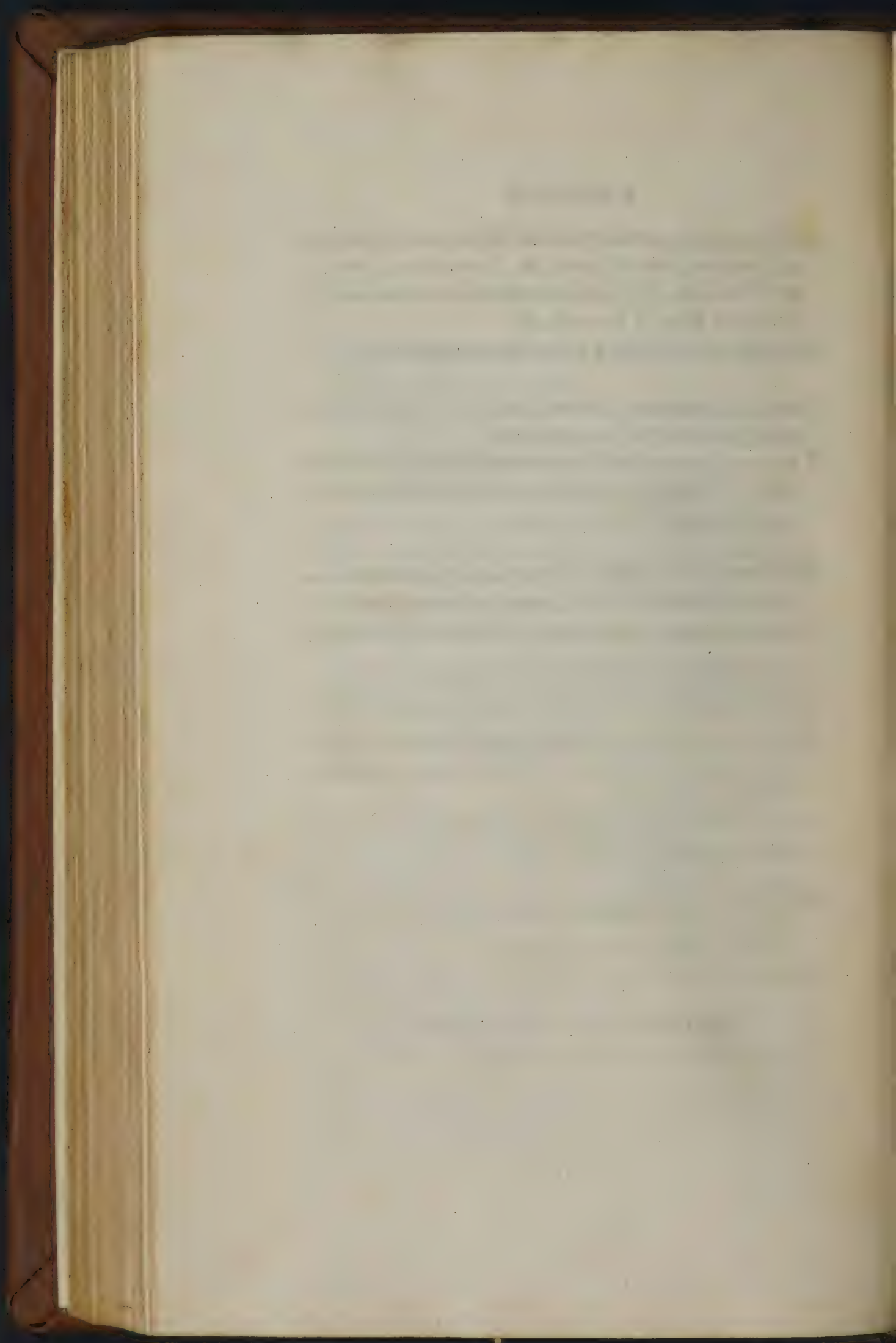
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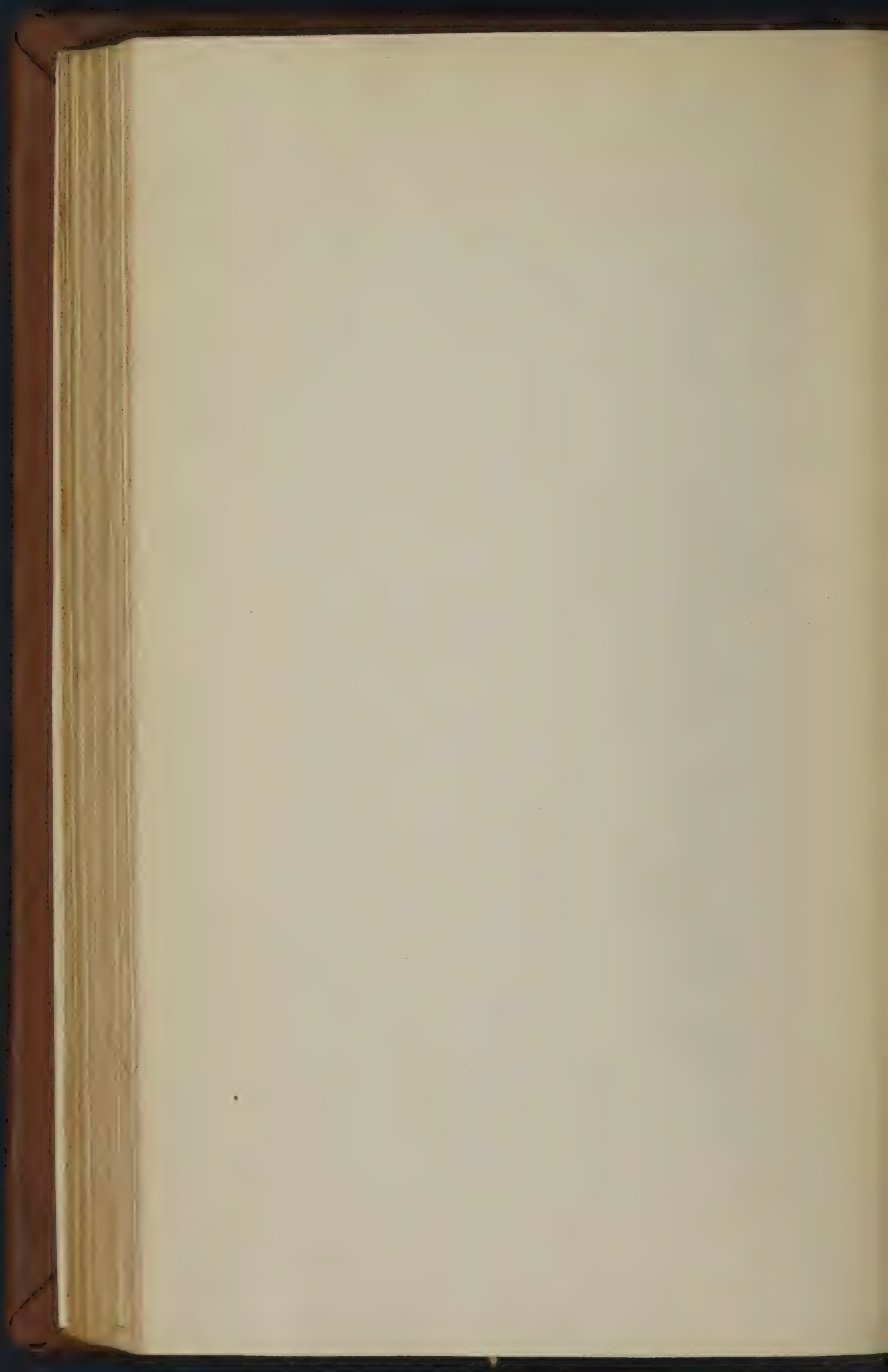
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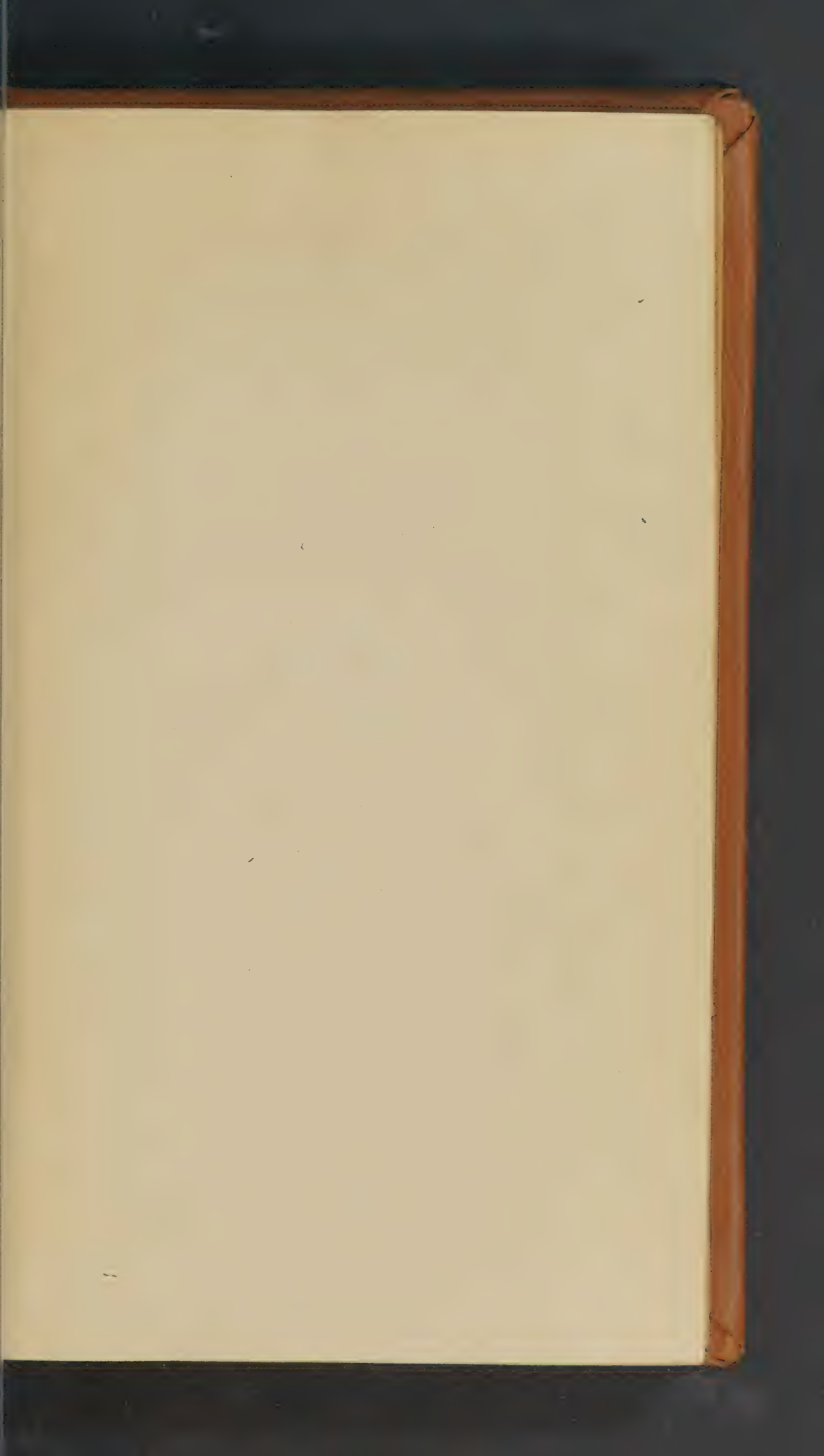








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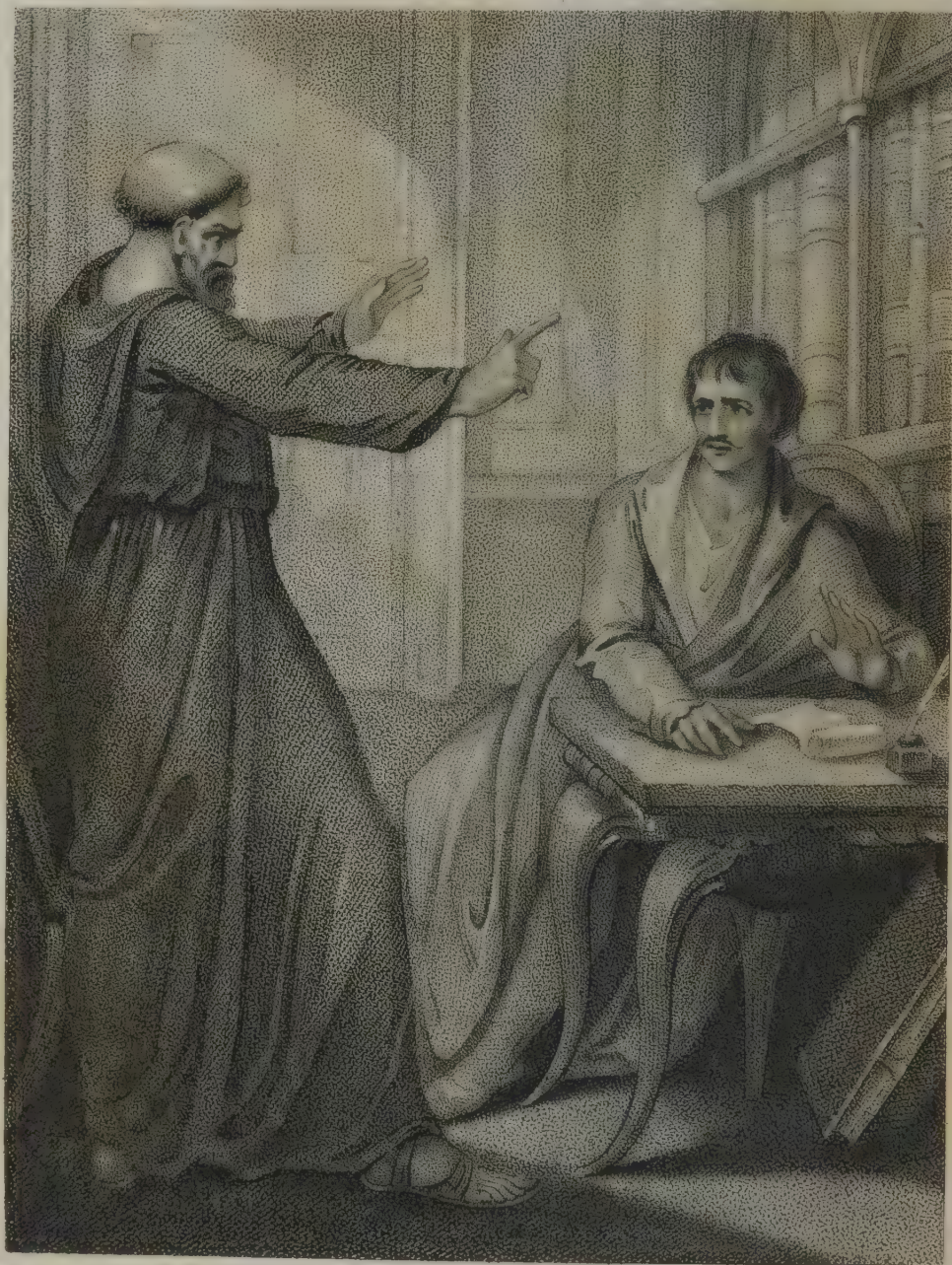




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*Beccace threatened by a Carthusian Friar.*

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THE  
LIFE  
OF  
PETRARCH.

COLLECTED FROM  
MEMOIRES POUR LA VIE DE PETRARCH,  
BY MRS. DOBSON.  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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THE FIFTH EDITION,  
EMBELLISHED WITH EIGHT COPPER-PLATES, DESIGNED BY  
KIRK, AND ENGRAVED BY RIDLEY.

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Rarò magni errores nisi ex magnis ingeniis prodière.

PETRARCH.

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THRICE happy minds that feel the power of friendship !  
Oft do the Muses, on a beauteous eve,  
The sky serene, and drowsy nature hush'd,  
Vouchsafe celestial sounds to friendly ears,  
And raise their kindred minds with such  
Warm fancy, and ethereal forms,  
As 'scape the vulgar intellectual eye.  
Why need I launch into the praise of friendship !  
Friendship, that best support of wretched man !  
Which gives us, when our life is painful to us,  
A sweet existence in another's being.

---

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1803.



THE  
LIFE  
OF

WILLIAM H. WATSON

OF THE  
ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES  
AND  
OF THE ARMY OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES

BY  
J. H. WATSON

WITH  
A  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
BY  
J. H. WATSON

NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY  
J. H. WATSON  
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P E T R A R C H.

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BOOK IV.

WE have seen in the life of Petrarch that his sorrows seldom came single. His eyes were still wet with tears for the death of Laura, when (the 3d of July, 1348) he lost cardinal Colonna, the man who had been so many years his friend and protector. Petrarch seems to think he was destroyed by grief, brought on by the disasters in his family. By some it was said he died of the plague. He lost in the space of five years, his mother and six of his brothers. Some time before the tragical death of his brother Etienne, he had a conversation with Petrarch, in which he deplored the losses



he had sustained. ‘Your father predicted them,’ said Petrarch. The cardinal demanded an account of this prediction. Petrarch was unwilling to comply with this request: but the cardinal insisted. Struck with what he heard, ‘Alas!’ says he, ‘I fear my father will prove too good a prophet.’ This venerable old man was yet alive, and had attained almost the age of an hundred years. Petrarch wrote him a letter of condolence, as follows:

‘Unfortunate old man! What crime have you committed? How have you merited the punishment of a tedious life? You resemble Metellus in your country, birth, riches, figure, and other qualities of mind and body, in an illustrious and fruitful wife, in the consular dignity, in the command of the Roman armies, in victories, and triumphs; in fine, in a great age, and a fortune sustained to the end: for the distresses you have undergone serve only to raise your glory. But Metellus had no brother: you had five, more famed for their virtue than for their birth. He had four sons, who exercised the offices of censors, priests, and consuls, and enjoyed the honors of triumph: you had seven sons; one a cardinal; another who would have borne a higher rank, had he lived to receive it; three bishops, and two generals; who, to

say all in one word, have almost equalled their father's reputation: and six daughters, worthy of the greatest praise. From this numerous and flourishing family there has arisen a multitude of children and grand-children, which cause you to resemble the patriarchs of old. Wherever the Roman name is known, you pass for the happiest of men. But, as Solon said to the king of Lydia, "No man can be called happy before death. The ashes and the tomb are the only faithful witnesses of the happiness of life." You would have been the greatest example of human felicity, if the end of your life had answered the course of it. A long life is like a voyage of a few days. The heavens alter, the wind changes; the rudder must be turned, and the sails folded up. Human life, like the sea, is exposed to frequent hurricanes, and the evening of the brightest day is often obscured and tempestuous. The wise ought to say of the world, as Palinurus, that famous pilot in Virgil, did of the sea, "Shall I confide in that monster?"

'You alone bear the weight of your losses, and you prove your fortitude and courage. Your beloved wife was happy as the wife of Evander, in that death spared her the grief to behold her children perish. And as you re-



sembled Metellus in the beginning, so you may compare yourself to Priam in the end of life. The former was buried by his children; the latter lived to bury his whole family. The inconstancy of fortune is such, that we know not what we ought to fear or to hope. Shall I advise you to hope or to despair? I will do neither: there would be too much presumption in the one, and too much weakness in the other. You cannot hope for more children. When old age is the season of marriage, it is as unnatural as harvest in winter. You need not despair on this account; for have you not yourself? What possession is more delightful than the enjoyment of a man's own soul? There have been fathers who have had an hundred children: Herotimes, king of Arabia, had that number. But, rare as is such an instance, it is still more so to find men who enjoy themselves. You have lost the conversation of your children; converse with yourself. In a life long and glorious like yours, how many things may you recall, honorable and agreeable to reflect on! You foresaw all that has happened to you. Recollect the conversation we had together at Rome: I have before my eyes that ancient monument on which we leaned as we conversed on this subject. Tears are due to na-

ture, but time should dry them up. Collect all the strength of your soul, and sustain with courage this last assault of Fortune. She triumphs more frequently by terror than by strength. You have lost the pleasures you enjoyed, but in their stead you have gained a real happiness. You have learned to distinguish the felicities of nature from the chimeras of the world; to discover truth in the midst of the shades that surround it; to be convinced that the advantages of life were not your own; and to despise the empire of a blind goddess, the idol of vulgar minds. The more you have lost, the less you have to lose hereafter. You came naked into the world, and naked shall you go out of it.'

Petrarch, exhausted by grief, addresses himself to Death in these lines:

'Thou hast taken from me the two treasures who were my joy and my confidence; that stately column which served me for support, and that green laurel under whose shade my weary soul reposed! Nothing can restore to me what I have lost. What remains for me, but to bemoan, all my future days, such irreparable losses? Our life is like the shadow of the sun passing over the plain. We lose in a moment what we have been years in acquiring.'



Soon after this letter of Petrarch's, old Etienne Colonna sunk under the weight of age, and of grief for the total extinction of his illustrious family.

The death of the cardinal was extremely felt at Avignon, where it left a great void, his house being the rendezvous of men of letters and of genius. Those Italians who composed his court could not bear Avignon after they had lost their Macænas. They dispersed. Three of these were the particular friends of Petrarch; Socrates, Luke Christien, and Mainard Accuife. Socrates was extremely embarrassed by the death of the cardinal: he felt it was impossible to live further from his dear Petrarch, and yet he could not determine to quit France for Italy: he wrote, without ceasing, the most pressing letters to Petrarch to return and settle in France.

Luke Christien was of a noble family at Rome. He had a benefice at Plaifance, and Petrarch had given him the canonship of Modena. He was a good companion, and had a very cultivated understanding. Mainard Accuife was descended from the great civilian of Florence, whom they styled the Idol of the Law. He was abbe of St. Antoine de Plaifance: an illiterate man, but of a most amiable, candid, and generous temper; and possessed of all those

kind and gentle qualities which contribute to the comfort of life. He determined with Luke to go to Italy to Petrarch, and settle with him the life they should lead, and the place in which they should fix their residence. They set out from Avignon in March, 1349, and arrived at Parma in April; but they did not find their friend; he was gone a little journey to Padua and Verona. Luke and Mainard passed a day in his house, to rest themselves; and when they went away, left a letter in his library, wherein they told him they had taken the route of the Alps, to come and see him at Parma; that they were going to make a tour through Italy, to settle their affairs, and would then return, and concert with him the means of living together. They begged him not to yield to the sollicitations of Socrates, who wanted, above all things, to bring him back to Vacluse.

When Petrarch returned to Parma, what was his concern to find the loss he had sustained! He wrote to his friends to testify his regret:

‘ You appear anxious lest Socrates should engage me to return to Vacluse. Moved by the repeated sollicitations of this dear friend, it is true I did give him hopes of it, if what I



proposed succeeded: that is, had I gained an establishment which should furnish me with a just pretext to remain there, and procure me at the same time the means of living with my friends, and receiving conveniently all those persons who are used to visit me. But when I wrote with this view, our master was alive. You was at Avignon with Luke, Lelius, and the small number of friends death had yet left me: these were so many lovers who drew me thither. Since that time the face of things has changed: our master is dead; you are all dispersed, and poor Socrates remains alone in that city: he is attached to it by the force of habit. I doubt not he wishes to be with us, and to see me above all: but how can he have the courage to propose our coming into a country where the bond of union is broken, and we should be as strangers without support, and without habitation? If we were like those happy souls, disengaged from the ties of the body, who inhabit the Elysian fields, who require only shady woods, beds of grass, or the banks of a river, and meadows watered by streams, Vaucluse would furnish us. But something more is necessary for those souls who drag their bodies along with them. The vulgar think that poets and philosophers are

made of stone; but they deceive themselves in this, as in many other things; they are really made of flesh. Vacluse would produce to us, as it did formerly, agreeable amusements when we are fatigued with our residence in the city; but it is not the place for a continual settlement. It is charming in summer: no one has proved this more sensibly than myself in a residence of ten years; and, not to incur the censure of vanity, I will add, it ought not to repent it had me for its guest. I have improved it the best I could; and it is known to many by my verses rather than by its own fame. From my tender youth I loved that fountain, and it was afterwards the port in which I took refuge. Alas! I knew not what I did! I brought with me there the cares that consumed me. I filled those beautiful vallies watered by the Sorgia with my cries and my tears, which resounded every where. These remembrances endear that solitude: but, alas! they embitter it too!

‘ The beauties of Vacluse I still admire: but can they be paralleled with those pure fountains, those majestic rivers, those vast lakes filled with fish, in fine, with those two seas which embrace Italy on every side? Not to speak of the other advantages of my country;



above all, the wit, genius, and manners, of its inhabitants. I know all this; and yet my friendship for you will not permit me to hide it; I sigh in renouncing Vacluse, and feel myself still irresistibly impelled towards it. Our youth is passed, and illusions are no longer to be indulged. What hinders us from gliding on the few days that remain in peace and study? We have lost the best of masters; and being at liberty, why should we not enjoy it? From the great we may hope good will, but among them we cannot flatter ourselves with uniting in true society: vanity, and that disparity of fortune which is the bane of friendship, prevents it. Fearing always to debase themselves, they will be adored rather than loved. Our master lived with us as his friends, and his service had nothing humbling or grievous; but we are now entirely free. We are not princes of the earth, or of the sea, as Aristotle says: but is this necessary to be happy? Have we not as much as those moderate spirits need who regulate their desires by the wants of nature? Suppose we were to join our little fortunes, we should live in abundance, and have much more to fear from envy than poverty. Why do we hesitate to do this? Why are we separated one from the

other by rivers, seas, and mountains? Why do not persons, so strictly united by friendship, who have but one heart and one soul, live also under the same roof? For my part, I have long fixed a term to my desires; and I fear not the reproach of my heir. I live for myself, and not for him, with whose disposition and character I am not yet acquainted. What greater happiness can we propose, than to pass our life with proved and united friends, with whom we think aloud, and who have but one will, one soul? Can any thing be more agreeable than faces always serene, minds always agreed, hearts always open; conversations where truth reigns without constraint, reserve, or preparation? This manner of life is the object of all my desires; if I can obtain it, I shall have no cause for envy.

‘ My house is not large, but it will accommodate such friends; and if our society should increase, I have a larger in the city, to which we may repair. My domestic, who appears a world to me, who love to be alone, is at present the only person who resides there. We have in the neighbourhood Bologna, where in the study of the law we passed the most delightful years of youth. With what pleasure shall we revisit the places we occupied in



the days of innocence and illusion ! But I mean not to prescribe to you. If you like Plaisance, where your abby is situated, I will follow you there : or to the Milanese, full of lakes and rivers, and surrounded by the Alps, which hang over these lakes, and are covered with snow even in the midst of summer : or to Genoa, where we shall have the Appennine over our heads, the sea at our feet, and the Tritons dancing before us ; where our ears will be saluted with the voice of Neptune, the sounds of the Nereides, and the dashing of the waves against the rocks. When we shall be weary of this spot, Padua presents a tranquil and charming situation. What a felicity will it be to live with James de Corrare, the most agreeable of men ? Virtue is always amiable ; but it is still more so in this age. Its rarity augments its value. We shall then be near Venice, which appears to me, who have seen the finest cities in Europe, the wonder of them all. Andres Dondolo, the present doge, is more illustrious for his wisdom than his birth. Torvise is near this city ; it is a town surrounded with rivers and fountains, the centre of joy and pleasure. They say that sameness is the mother of disquiet ; variety shall then be the cure. Let us unite without loss of time,

Come here, if that suits you ; if not, choose a place where we may live and die in tranquillity. I am ready to follow you every where, even to a barbarous clime, if you make choice of it : I will renounce my own inclination to adopt yours : I shall be at ease any where, if I am but in your society.'

Petrarch, desirous of an early answer, sought among his servants a messenger whom he could best spare for this journey, and fixed upon his cook, adding the following lines :

'The most vulgar peasant is qualified for my kitchen. I prefer the most simple meats, prepared without art or labor. I think with Epicurus, that no cheer is more delicious than the fruits and herbs of my garden. I always approved a taste conformable to nature. Not that I dislike a good repast now and then, but it should come very rarely. Among the Romans, before the conquest of Asia, the cook was the vilest of slaves. Would to God they had never conquered that part of the world, which has subdued them by its softness and luxury ! Be so good to communicate this letter to our friends ; and, if you find an opportunity, send it to Socrates at Avignon.'

In June 1349, while Petrarch was revolving



in his mind the happiest idea of his future union with his friends, his cook came back in the midst of a heavy storm. Petrarch, not expecting him so soon, and knowing by his air that he brought bad news, was seized with consternation. He was writing, and the pen fell from his hand. 'What is the matter? What news do you bring me?' said he in haste. 'Alas! very bad,' replied the servant, with a voice interrupted by his sobs. 'Your two friends fell into the hands of thieves on the top of mount Appennine. O God! what a sad accident! Mainard, who had stopped for something, they surrounded, and murdered. Luke, hearing his cries, galloped back to him sword in hand: he alone fought ten of them; but at last he received so many wounds, that he fell almost dead to the earth. The thieves fled with their prey. Some peasants, drawn thither by the noise, would infallibly have taken them, if some gentlemen, unworthy to be called so, had not stopped their pursuit, and admitted the thieves into their castles. Luke was seen with sword in hand among the rocks, but no one knows what is become of him.' The condition of Petrarch, when he heard these dreadful tidings, cannot be described. He sent

couriers immediately to Plaifance, Florence, and Rome, to fee if they could hear any thing of Luke.

These thieves and banditti were villains and proſcribed perſons from Florence, who had fortified themſelves in remote and inaccessible places, from whence they iſſued forth, and committed the moſt horrid murders. They were backed by the Ubaldini, a very ancient and powerful houſe in Tuſcany, who had ſeveral impregnable fortrefſes in the Appennine, near the city of Mugella, of which they were lords. Theſe were the gentlemen unworthy of being called ſo, ſpoken of by Petrarch's cook. They gave an aſylum to theſe banditti in their caſtles, favored their conduct, and divided with them the ſpoil. Villani, the hiſtorian of this age, from whom this account is taken, adds, that 'theſe thieves, having learned that Mainard of Florence was returning from Avignon with two thouſand florins of gold, they lay in wait for him, killed and riſſled him in the country of Florence.' Petrarch thought it his duty to write to thoſe who governed the city of Florence, to engage them to purſue the villains into their entrenchments, and ensure the ſafety of the highways. After a compliment to the republic, he ſays :



‘I have just received news which is grief to my soul. Mainard Accuise, one of your best citizens, and my dear friend, returning from the court of Avignon, and going to Florence, was assassinated near the gates of the city, in the bosom of his country, and, so to speak, in the face of his friends. This unfortunate man, after having traversed the earth, and suffered much in his youth, was coming to pass in tranquillity the remains of a laborious and agitated life: and he flattered himself with a quiet death and burial in that land where he received his birth. Barbarous men, or rather savage beasts, have envied him this consolation. O times! O manners! Who could have believed that this gentle and good man, after having travelled without accident through the midst of those cruel nations who inhabit the borders of the Rhone, traversed the deserts of Provence, the most desolate and depraved country in the world; after passing the night among the Alps, where are whole armies of banditti, should be sacrificed in open day at the very gates of Florence? Gold in ancient times, but blood now, is the object of these wretches. What else could induce them to plunge their swords into the breast of an innocent man, stripped and disarmed, who could





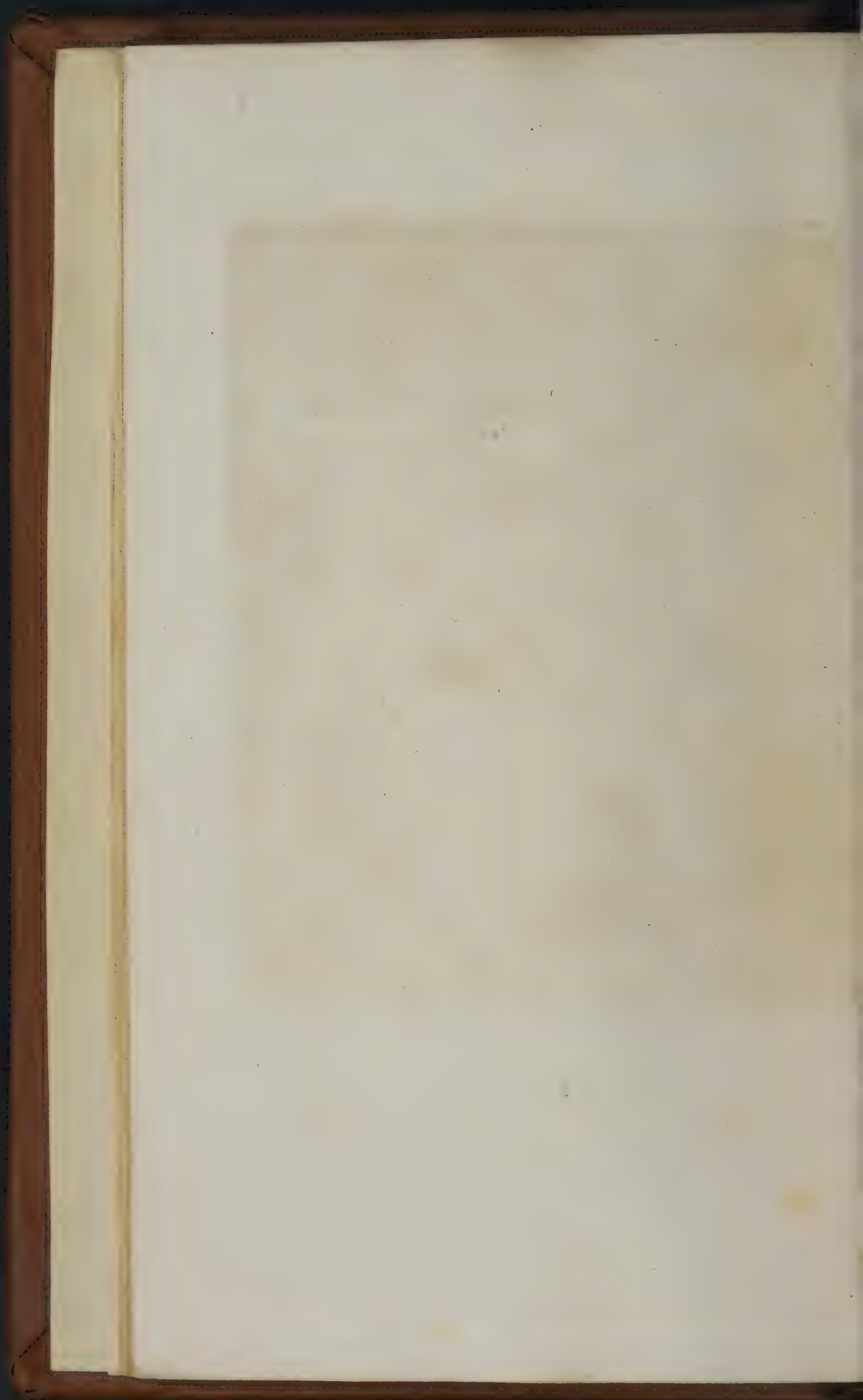
Kirk delin.

Ridley sculp

*Murder of Mainard & Accuse in the Forrest.*

Published by Vernon and Hood in Paulby July 31. 1757.





never have revenged their robbery? For what have they to fear in those impregnable fortresses, which serve them for caverns and asylums, from whence they brave Florence and Heaven itself?

‘Justice is the basis of all grandeur and prosperity. Assassins threaten you to the face, who dared not conceive mischief in the time of your fathers. If you leave such actions unpunished, there is an end of your glory, and of your republic. Its foundation overthrown, it must sink. But I feel that your justice will not tarry; it will overtake them. You are distressed, ’tis true, by these banditti: but true virtue comes as pure out of adversity, as gold out of the crucible; and your courage will increase in proportion to your difficulties. But what will relieve my grief? The most eloquent words I can use, even the lyre of Orpheus itself, cannot restore to me the friend I have lost. I do not propose it to you to raise him from the dead, but to preserve his honor from burial; and, which is a most important object, to free the Appennine from banditti, which is the general road to Rome. These mountains have been always steep and rugged, but formerly they were traversed with the greatest security. But if those that should be the guardians be-



come the robbers, and, instead of faithful dogs, watching from their castles to protect, become wolves to destroy, terror will spread over the mind, the Appennine will become desert, and more uninhabitable than Atlas or Caucasus. Illustrious citizens ! prevent this disgrace. Those that would pull up a tree begin at the roots ; in like manner those who would exterminate thieves, must seek them in their secret retreats. Have the goodness also to seek out the other friend of whose fate I am uncertain. But I dread the worst. God maintain the happiness of your republic.'

This letter had the success it deserved. The Florentines sent an army against the Ubaldini, and took in less than two months a great many of their castles, and made great havock in their estates. The body of Mainard was found, and buried with honor ; a poor consolation for Petrarch ! He sought news of Luke from every one he met with, and trembled at each noise around him. He had lost all hope, when a Milanese merchant of his acquaintance called on him, saying, 'I was told you were here, and would not pass without paying my respects to you.' 'You are very polite, Sir. May I inquire the road you came?' 'From Florence,' replied the merchant, 'I set out from thence

four days ago.' 'Good Heaven!' said Petrarch, "which then was your route?" 'Not the high road,' replied the merchant; I was warned against that. I took a by-path through the woods. You know, without doubt, the accident that has happened to a citizen of Florence; the whole city is in arms to revenge his death. The army is already encamped on the Appennine.' 'I know it,' said Petrarch: 'but is it true that the persons who accompanied this Florentine have perished with him?' 'I only heard speak of one person who suffered,' replied the merchant: 'had there been several, it would have been mentioned: but I can affirm nothing, as I know only the public report.' This revived the hopes of Petrarch. In this uncertain and afflicted state of mind, and continually hearing of and beholding the devastations made by the plague, he wrote the following letter to his dear Socrates:

'Has any annals since the destruction of Troy shewn such terror and desolation as we now behold? Lands abandoned; cities depopulated, fields covered with dead bodies; the whole earth almost become one vast desert! Ask the historians; they say nothing. Consult the physicians; they are astonished and confounded. Address the philosophers; they shrug



up their shoulders, knit their brows, and put their finger on their lips. Our streets, heaped up with dead bodies, resemble a charnel-house rather than a city; and we are amazed when we re-enter our houses, to find any thing remaining that is dear to us. Happy, thrice happy, the future age, which will, perhaps, look upon our calamities as a series of fables! In the most bloody war there is some resource, and an honorable death is a great consolation. But here we have none. And is it then true, as some philosophers have advanced, that God has no concern for what passes on the earth? Let us cast far from us so senseless an opinion. If he has not, how could the world subsist? Some philosophers have given this care to nature. Seneca justly views such as ungrateful men, who would hide, under a borrowed name, the benefits of the Supreme Cause, and, by an impious subtilty, tempt men to deprive him of his just homage.

‘ Yes, great God! thou carest for us; we cannot doubt it: but how impenetrable are thy judgments! If we are punished more than others, we are no doubt more culpable. Perhaps thou wouldst prove, thou wouldst purify us, and render us more deserving of thy benefits; but how little do we know! There may

be other causes of evil, to which our weak intelligence cannot arrive.

‘Alas! my dear Socrates, we have outlived our friends, and almost outlived ourselves!’

Petrarch, willing to replace the voids which death had made in his heart, attached himself to Paganino Bezzosi, a man of sense and conversation. The circumstances of the times had contributed to their immediate union. Distress softens the heart, and ties close the bonds of affection: the more we have lost, the more we are attached to what remains behind.

‘Our fortunes became common,’ said he.

‘After a short trial of his worth, I found he merited my confidence, and he proved a sort of Socrates in the friendship he shewed me.’ But death envied Petrarch this consolation in his misfortunes. Paganino was struck with the plague: but this did not hinder his supping with his friends. After supper, he discoursed with Petrarch as usual. He suffered with amazing fortitude all night the most violent pain, and expired before morning.

There remained at this time to Petrarch only three of his old friends; Gui Settimo, Lelius, and Socrates. Settimo was making his court at Avignon. Lelius had retired to Rome, his native city, some time before the death of car-



dinal Colonna. Petrarch was very uneasy about Socrates; he had written him several letters by safe hands, but had received no answer. He wrote again, with a letter enclosed to his brother Gerard, who had made great progress in the spiritual life in the seven years he had been among the Carthusians.

This month, September, 1349, there was another scourge which oppressed mankind. The earth was agitated in a violent manner. These earthquakes in some places lasted several days, and the violence of the shocks caused great havoc in the city of Rome. Petrarch speaks thus of it in a letter:

‘I tremble not only for Rome, but for all Italy. My blood freezes when I recall the last words of the prophecy of Balaam: “They shall come from Italy in ships, they shall vanquish the Assyrians, and ravage the Hebrews.” This prophecy has been accomplished in the fall of the Roman empire. God send that these earthquakes do not foretell the loss of peace and liberty to our land!’

Petrarch paid a visit this year to Gonzagua, lord of Mantua, who had invited him so pressing to reside at his court. Lewis de Gonzagua had associated his three sons in the government, with himself, and assigned them

employments suited to their genius. Gui, the eldest, liberal, magnificent, and a lover of letters, was charged with all that concerns the interior government of the city, and its negotiations with strangers. Philipon, active, unquiet, warlike, had the department of war, and was general of the army: he had attended the king of Hungary in his expedition to Naples to revenge his brother's death, and was lately returned from thence. Feltrin, who loved the arts, had the direction of the buildings, fortifications, reparations of the highways, &c. Lewis de Gonzagua, sinking under the weight of years, (for he was above fourscore,) had resigned the government to his children; and they shewed, in their admirable conduct, what may be accomplished in a small state by three brothers firmly united.

Gui, who was the patron of letters, and had long known our poet, gave him a very distinguished reception. A dispatch being sent to Avignon, in the letters of the chancellor, who was the negociator, and Petrarch's friend, no mention being made of him, Gui reproached the chancellor, saying, ' You speak of our affairs, you tell us what passes at the Roman court, and you say nothing of Petrarch, in whom I am more interested than in them all.



The chancellor communicated this sentiment to Petrarch, who expressed his acknowledgment by saying, 'The power of love extends from pole to pole, and binds men by invisible ties, however situation may separate them; as Augustus manifested in his affection for Virgil, the son of a Mantuan labourer, and Horace, son of a freed man, to whom he wrote with the most affectionate familiarity. If such examples render it less surprizing that I should be so honored, I feel not less sensibly the glory of being treated like these great men, when I fall so short of their merit. One of them said, "It is not a little matter to obtain favor of princes:" for my part, I know not how I came to please others, who could never please myself.'

Petrarch was at Mantua. He went to see that little village famous for the birth of Virgil: it is only a small league from that city. It was formerly called Andes; its present name is Pietola. On this spot his fancy kindled, and he wrote the following lines to Virgil:

'Great poet! the honor of Rome, the fruitful hope of the Muses! tell me where you are at present? In what part of Avernus are you enclosed? Or are you not rather on Parnassus with Apollo and the Nine, who en-

chant you with their concerts? Perhaps you are walking in the woods, or in the Elysian fields, with Homer, whom you so much resemble, with Orpheus, and the other poets of the first rank. I except Lucan and Lucretius, and all those who, like them, put an end to their own lives. I would know the life you lead; wherein your dreams differed from truth, and where is the ivory door through which you caused Æneas to pass on his return from hell. I willingly believe that you inhabit that region of heaven allotted to happy souls.

‘ If any mortal shade is admitted to your celestial mansions, mine shall attend you there, and inform you what passes in the place dear to you, and the fate of your works. Mantua, whose glory you are, has been agitated by the troubles of its neighbours. Defended by princes full of valor, she has refused to come under a strange yoke, and will only be governed by her children. It is there I write these lines, in a solitary place near your tomb. I seek with ardor the rocks to which you retired, the meadows where you walked on the banks of the Mineio, the trees under which you sought a cooling shade, the woods which were your asylum against the heat, and the green banks where you were seated at the foot of your ri-



ver. All these things retrace your image. The unfortunate city of Naples, honored with your ashes, groans for the loss of king Robert. In one day it was deprived of the felicity of years. Inquire not the fate of Rome! Alas! it is better to be ignorant of it. Learn rather the success of your productions. Old Tityrus charms every one with the soft sounds of his pipe. Nothing can be more beautiful than the cultivated fields of your Georgics. Your *Æneid* is known through the world; it is sung, it is delighted in every where: how much are we obliged to Augustus, who saved it from those flames to which you had condemned it!

‘Adieu! You will be always dear to me. Present my salutations to Homer and Hesiod.’

There was a great friendship between Gui and Petrarch. The former loved reading, and this confirmed the bond between them. He asked Petrarch one day for a foreign book in the vulgar tongue; he sent him the romance of the Rose, with these lines:

‘I send you a little book that France praises to the skies, and ranks with the first writings. It proves, in my opinion, how much Italy surpasses all other nations in eloquence, except the Greeks.

‘A Frenchman relates his dreams; his de-

sign is to explain the power of love, the force of jealousy, the tricks of an old woman, and the stratagems of a lover. He shews the evils which love draws after it; the contrary feelings it meets with in its progress; labor and repose, grief and joy, groans and laughter; and he proves that pleasures are rare, and mixed with tears. The author may well say he dreams; one could never suppose him awake. How much more pathetic are the episode of Dido, and the lines of Catullus, Horace, and Ovid, without speaking of other ancient and modern authors who have described this passion! I send it, however, because I have nothing better, unless all France, and even Paris, its capital, are in an error.' This poem was begun in the thirteenth century by William de Lorris, who died before he had finished it. John de Meun forty years after continued and completed it: it is full of satire on all conditions, of digressions, and episodes; and the women in it are painted in the blackest colors.

From Mantua Petrarch went to Verona, and from thence to Padua, where James de Carrore gave him a canonship, which he held with his archdeaconry and canonship of Parma. There came to Padua, during his stay there, cardinal Gui de Boulogne, the pope's legate;



he came from Hungary, whither the pope had sent him. The object of this embassy was the troubles of Naples, occasioned by the tragic death of prince Andrew. Petrarch was much favored by this cardinal. Gui de Boulogne was the son of Robert, the seventh count of Auvergne, and of Mary of Flanders: to this exalted birth he joined wit and talents, and had studied at Paris with success. The archbishopric of Lyons was given to him when he was only twenty years of age. Two years after, Clement VI. who made him cardinal at the solicitation of Philip de Valois, wrote these lines to that prince: 'The subject you have recommended to me has a cultivated mind; his character is amiable, his manners honest, his life decent: in spiritual things he is enlightened, and full of zeal; in temporal, wise and circumspect.' Notwithstanding his youth, the pope confided to him several important affairs, in the discharge of which he answered the idea that had been conceived of him, which induced him to send him into Hungary on this difficult negociation. The king of Hungary, as we have seen, went to Naples with an army to revenge his brother's death, and to seize his kingdom, which he pretended belonged to him. He took with him duke Warner, a chief who

was the scourge of Italy, and who soon caused that kingdom to float in seas of blood. The king of Hungary conquered, and queen Joan fled into Provence from his fury. The princes of the blood went to Avesse, to acknowledge and pay homage to the king, who was their cousin. He received them very well: after which he ordered Charles Duras to conduct him to the place where his brother had been strangled, and there, in his presence, he had this prince assassinated, after reproaching him with having contributed to his death. The other princes of the blood he put in irons, and sent them into Hungary. After this expedition, the king sent ambassadors to the pope to justify his conduct, to solicit the investiture of the kingdom of Naples, and the punishment of queen Joan; and he complained bitterly of the cardinal de Taillerand, whom he accused of having imbrued his hands in the murder of his brother. Soon after this the plague obliged him to quit Naples, and return into Hungary.

The negociation of this affair was very delicate. Gui de Boulogne was related to the king of Hungary, and had an insinuating disposition, that the pope thought well suited to it. He was to propose peace between the king of Hun-



gary and the queen of Naples; to solicit the freedom of the princes of the blood; to desire the account of the proceedings, that he might judge of queen Joan's conduct; to justify cardinal Taillerand; and, lastly, to engage the emperor Charles to support this negociation with his son-in-law. The cardinal legate, notwithstanding his talents, could do no more than obtain a truce. He was ordered, on his return from Italy, to go to Rome to the jubilee, and use his endeavors to procure peace. His legateship extended over all that part of Italy between the Alps and the Appennine. He arrived at Padua in February, 1350, and was received with extraordinary honors. James de Carrore gave up his palace to him, and defrayed his expences, with all those of his train, which amounted to three hundred. He stopped some days in this city to remove the body of St. Anthony, which they drew out of the tomb, to place it in a church he had built and dedicated to this saint. The cardinal had experienced his protection in a violent disease, and, to shew his acknowledgment, would be present and assist at this ceremony. He was glad to find Petrarch at Padua, whom he had known at Avignon, and took every opportunity of conversing with him. In one of these

meetings he shewed him a letter he had just received from a prelate in France attached to him, and who was also the friend of Petrarch. This was Philip de Vitri, celebrated for his French and Latin works, and his excellence in church music. He was chaplain to the pope and the cardinal of Boulogne, and archdeacon of Brie in the church of Soissons. He had applied himself when young to poetry and music, which contributed not a little to unite him with Petrarch. Philip de Vitri was of the opinion which the French, particularly the Parisians, were reproached with. He looked upon every journey out of France as an exile. He wrote in this manner to the cardinal, lamenting his residence in Hungary and Italy. The cardinal did not reflect upon the consequences when he gave this letter to Petrarch. To call a journey to Italy an exile, was like blasphemy in the eyes of our poet. He took pen in hand immediately, and wrote to Vitri as follows:

‘ Why should not I dare to tell my dear Philip at a distance, what I should certainly say if he was present? Nothing is so free as friendship. “ I do not love my friend,” says Seneca, “ if I fear to offend him.” My dear friend, I do not know you again. I know that what rises must sink; that all that are born grow



old: but I thought minds exempted from the fate of terrestrial bodies, because, being formed of an ethereal substance, they rise by their own strength, or, to speak better, on the wings of nature. If the mind grows old, it may then die. Old age may be the end of being, and the descent of it to the grave. Alas! if we are thus deprived of the sweet consolation, that this noble part of us will live for ever, what shall console us when we become the subjects of death! You will guess what this long preamble leads to. We have here our illustrious father, and common master, cardinal Gui de Boulogne, legate of the holy see. You blush; I see it: your conscience is not without remorse. Confess that you did not think I should see the letter you wrote: if you had, you would not have spoken in a style so weak and unjust; you would at least have respected the Muses, who live with me, and whose indignation you would have felt, had the time permitted. What is become of that admirable ardor, that desire of all knowledge, which formerly distinguished you? You would then, if possible, have drawn off from Nature the veil that covers her. What attempts did you not make toward discoveries in the Northern and Eastern Ocean! The earth itself was then too small for your curiosity. You raised

your desires even to heaven. The oblique path of the sun, the fixed and wandering stars, nothing escaped your indefatigable researches; not even the antipodes of heaven, if antipodes of heaven there be.

‘ Is it possible that a man so eager after knowledge of all kinds should give the name of exile to a journey into Italy, out of which all would be banishment indeed, if the whole world was not the country of every thinking man? Shall I be frank with you? The little bridge of Paris has made too strong an impression on you; and your ears are too much delighted with the murmurs of the Seine, which runs under its arches. You have, no doubt, forgot the answer of the man, who, being asked from whence he came, “ I am a Cosmopolite,” replied he. As for you, you are French: no one can deny that; and to such a degree French, that you consider every journey out of France as a banishment, whatever may be the motive of it.

‘ I know that we all have an innate love for our country, and that the greatest men have been sensible to its attractions; but I know also, that it is only little minds that cannot shake off these fetters. How many heroes and philosophers have passed their whole lives in tra-



velling! Plato quitted Athens, where he was adored as a god, to travel over Egypt and Italy. The journies of Democritus are celebrated; and still more so those of Pythagoras, who never returned home. More inflamed by the love of truth than the love of his country, after going over Egypt, Persia, and many barbarous countries, he was twenty years in Italy; and you weep for one only that your master passes there. Awake, my dear friend; shake off the lethargy you are in. Elevate your soul, which is sunk under popular prejudices, and which, tied down to the glebe of its native field, sees nothing beautiful; nothing rare, beyond Paris. Give me back that ancient Philip, in whose conversation I found so many charms. It is not to him I write, it is to one of his enemies: so he must not be offended if he finds in this letter remonstrances too strong for the softness and luxury of our age.

‘ But I will return to our exile. I wish you saw him in his present brilliant situation, surrounded by a concourse of people, and even princes applauding and calling him the restorer of peace. This is the state of your banished man. I know you love him with all your heart. Cease then to lament his fate; rather lament your own as exiled and unhappy, that

you cannot behold his glory. He is in the flower of his age, his body strong, his mind eager after knowledge. It is experience, as artists know, that forms great men. What can those learn who never go beyond their paternal estate? Homer, desiring to give the Greeks a model of wisdom, presents them with a man who had visited several cities, and studied many nations; and Virgil imitated him in the *Æneid*: and must not our master then delight in the lofty mountains which are the barriers of Italy, the magnificent cities it contains, and the beautiful rivers that water it? Our prelate to-day assisted in removing the body of St. Anthony: I admired the dignity and grace with which he performed his office. To-morrow he continues his route; and, after crossing the king of rivers, will see Ravenna, the most ancient city in Italy, and proceed to the capital of the world. As for you, my dear Philip, when you go from St. Germain on the mountain to St. Genievieve in the valley, you think you have been through the wide world; happy in your manner of thinking, if true happiness can consist with error. But in your letter you did not follow your own judgment, but the judgment of the vulgar, which is always mean and ignorant. Adieu! take care of your-



self, and do not forget me. Mark, the physician and the countryman of Virgil salutes you.'

'Padua, February 14.'

Petrarch went from Padua to Verona to see his son and his friends, from whence he wrote to Socrates, and besought him to come to him in Italy, and settle there, in any part of it he should make choice of; but he could not persuade him to leave Avignon. The few friends he had left were separated from him by necessity. Barbatius was established at Sulmone with his wife, and could not leave her. Lelius and Settimo were both settled at Rome and Avignon. He had lately cultivated a friendship with two Florentines, Francis Rinnuci, and John Boccace, of whom we shall soon have occasion to speak; who were both so attached to the place of their nativity, that nothing could draw them from thence.

Petrarch returned soon after to Padua, to wait the arrival of the cardinal de Boulogne, who came there on his way home. After having distributed spiritual and temporal benefits with the greatest beneficence, he took the route of Milan and Genoa to return to Avignon: and he had in his train a vast number of

distinguished persons from every state in Italy, and received the greatest honors wherever he passed.

Petrarch, who was not a courtier, accompanied this prelate from attachment, and as an acknowledgment of the kindness he had shewn him. The cardinal delighted in his conversation, and bantered him sometimes on his enthusiasm for his country. When they came into the territory of Verona, near the lake of Garda, struck with the beauty of the spot, they ascended a little hill, and stopped to view the fine objects around them: the Alps covered with snow, though in the month of June; the lake of Garda, subject to the ebbing and flowing of the tide as the sea; on every side rich hills and fertile vallies. 'It must be owned,' said the legate, addressing himself to Petrarch, 'that your country is finer and richer than ours!' At these words the face of Petrarch brightened with joy! 'But you must agree also,' added the cardinal, to moderate, perhaps, the violence of his effusion, 'that ours is more tranquil.' 'That is true,' replied Petrarch, with that liberty which he always professed; 'but we can obtain that tranquillity you enjoy when we please; whereas it does not depend on you to procure those beauties of which Nature



has been prodigal to us.' The cardinal smiled, and continued his route. Petrarch took leave of him here, and returned to Parma. At Mantua, which he passed through, he wrote another letter to his dear Socrates, to recommend to him a young abbe whom he became acquainted with among the attendants of the cardinal de Boulogne. He describes him as a young man of rare merit, whose friendship was a treasure he wished him to partake of.

'Joys of this kind,' says he, 'ought to be common between friends. Go, and see him; you will instantly feel it is that Socrates of whom I have often spoke to you. You will be charmed with the society of such a man, whose equal I have rarely found. I feel what may be the consequence of uniting two persons, who, in tracing one another's virtues, will easily lose sight of mine: but I shall console myself in the persuasion, that what I lose in merit I shall gain in friendship.'

After having finished this letter, Petrarch set out for Mantua in the evening to sleep at Luzora, five leagues from the Po. The Gonzaguas were lords of this city: they had sent a courier to Mantua, to desire he would honor them at supper. It was with difficulty he got there. The south wind, which blew,

had melted the snows; the Po had overflowed the country round, and filled the roads with a quaggy mud, in which the horses sunk at every step.

He got there late. They gave him a magnificent reception; rare meats, foreign wines, delicate cheer, welcome countenances, and much gaiety. A little matter will spoil a fine feast, and lose the fruits of a great expence. The supper was served in a damp hall, which flies and all sorts of insects had taken possession of; and, to complete the distress, an army of frogs, who had been attracted by the good odour of the meats, came forth, and stunned the company with their importunate croakings. They could not sit in the room, and were obliged to leave the table before supper was ended. Petrarch retired to his chamber at midnight very much fatigued. But a courier passing to Rome, he wrote a letter to Lelius, in which was this account of the supper. The next day he went to Parma. He waited till the great heats were over, to go to the jubilee held this year at Rome. He wrote to his friend William de Pastrengo, to take this journey with him. This friend wished for nothing so much as the society of Petrarch on this occasion; but he was established at Verona, and he had a wife and



children. All his family opposed this journey, and he could not overcome their fears. Instead, therefore, of William, Petrarch took with him an old abbe of respectable character and dignity, and some persons whose experience might save him much trouble. They took their route through Tuscany, and stopped at Florence. What impressions agitated the mind of Petrarch to behold his native city, which he had left so young that he had retained only a confused idea of it! They had not yet restored him his estate, for the Guelph party still governed there. He found, however, several friends, who, though not of long standing, had made great progress in his heart, that had suffered many voids from death which he wished to fill up.

The first of these was Zanobi de Strata, born at Florence, where John, his father, had taught grammar all his life with success. Zanobi continued and surpassed him in that profession. His talents for eloquence and poetry united him with the most distinguished persons for rank and wit in Tuscany.

Francis Rinnuci was of a good house in Florence; his ancestors had been the first magistrates in that city. Francis had embraced the ecclesiastical state: he was first notary, judge,

and secretary of the bishop, and afterwards supreme vicar; and he was prior and preacher of the church of the Holy Apostles, which had been formerly the collegiate church. It appears that he was a wise and pious man, and much esteemed at Florence. Petrarch gave him the name of Simonides.

John de Certaldo, or John Boccace, whose family was of Certaldo, a village twenty miles from Florence, was born at Paris. His mother was a young woman, with whom his father was secretly connected. He studied grammar under John de Strata, and the canon law under Cino de Pistoie. The taste which nature had given him for poetry and the belles lettres defeated the projects of his father, who designed him for a civilian. It is believed, however, he was made doctor of laws; after which he certainly went for a time into the church. His father sent him on some business to Naples, where king Robert, who soon discovered his talents, received him with kindness, and loved to discourse with him. That prince had a daughter, the fruit of the only weakness that his character is reproached with: she was called Mary of Arragon by the historians. Boccace fell in love with her, and has celebrated her in his works. During his situation at Naples he



heard Petrarch spoken of in such a manner, that it inspired him with a great desire to see him. He took the first occasion to form this union, and it lasted till death. They had each the same tastes and the same aversions; the same ardent desire of knowledge, frankness, truth of mind, and tenderness of heart: there was a similarity also in their love. We have seen that Petrarch became enchanted with Laura in the church of St. Clare, in the holy week. Boccace also saw and loved Mary for the first time in the church of the Cordeliers at Naples. On Easter-day these friends consoled Petrarch for his past losses.

About the middle of October, 1350, Petrarch left Florence, and set out for Rome. He gives this account of his journey in a letter to Boccace. 'The 15th of October we set out from Bolsena, a small town in Etruria. Taken up with the thoughts of seeing Rome once more, I reflected upon the change that is made in our thoughts in a course of years. This, said I to myself, is my fifth journey to Rome; it was fourteen years ago I saw it for the first time, drawn by curiosity to behold its wonders. Some years after, a premature desire of the laurel brought me there a second time. The third and fourth journey was to render service

and shew affection to my friends. This ought to be the happiest of all, since its only object is my eternal salvation. While I was full of these thoughts, the horse of the old abbe, which was on my left side, going to kick at mine, struck my leg just under the knee: the stroke was so violent that it sounded like bones snapping asunder, and drew all our party round me. I felt extreme pain: but not daring to stop in so solitary a place, I made a virtue of necessity, got late to Viterbe, and was dragged to Rome by the aid of my friends. As soon as I got there I sent for the physicians, who having examined my wound, found the bone laid open, and the iron of the horse's shoe had left a mark on it. The smell of this neglected wound was so strong that I could scarcely bear it; though our familiarity with, and affection for ourselves, renders many things supportable we could not bear in others. How vile and abject is man, said I, if he does not compensate for the weakness of his body by the strength of his mind! The days I was obliged to pass wholly in bed appeared longer here than elsewhere. I consider this accident as a just punishment from heaven, who, after having fixed my unsteady soul, thought it proper thus to afflict my unworthy body. My confessor had



treated me with too much lenity; I stood in need of this mortification. If my accident affects you, the courage with which I support it shall be your consolation.'

Petrarch says he was in the happiest disposition for this sacred bath, in which the soul was to be cleansed from all its stains. We have seen that pope Clement altered this jubilee from a hundred to fifty years, and in a clause of this bull (as some aver) he speaks as follows: 'The sovereign pontiff, in virtue of the authority he holds from the apostles, renews the souls of those who receive this indulgence to the same state they were in after baptism; and he orders the angels to introduce them immediately to paradise, without obliging them on their way thither to pass through purgatory.'

The custom of visiting Rome to receive a plenary absolution of all sins was begun in 1300, from a rumour that this had been practised before. It was not, however, to be found in the ancient records: but an old man, aged 107, being questioned about it, said he remembered that, in the year 1200, his father, who was a laborer, went to Rome to gain this indulgence. It was accordingly confirmed by the bull of pope Boniface; and Clement gave it the name of the jubilee, because it resembled

the festival of the Jews celebrated every fifty years, at which slaves were set free, debts forgiven, and each person obtained the wealth and honor of their family.

The concourse of pilgrims at this jubilee was prodigious; they were reckoned near a million. The streets were so full that men were carried along by the crowd, whether on horseback or on foot. There was no appearance that the plague had depopulated the world. The people of quality came the last to it; and, above all, the ladies of the grandees from beyond the mountains. Most of them took the route of Areona; and Bernardin de Polenta, lord of Ravenna, whose castle was on this road, joined, and made great confusion among them. 'This would not have befallen them,' says a contemporary historian, 'if they had remained in their houses; because a ship which is always in port cannot be shipwrecked. Indulgencies and journies,' he adds 'are not fit for young people.' Strangers who came from all countries, knowing only their own language, were embarrassed about confession. They therefore made use of interpreters, who often published what they heard; and it became necessary to buy their silence at a dear rate. To remedy this abuse, they established peniten-



tiaries at Rome, who understood all the languages. The kings of Castile, Arragon, Portugal, and Cyprus, would fain have obtained indulgence without going to Rome. They wrote to the pope to beg he would dispense with this journey; but the cardinals opposing, he wrote this answer to these princes: 'My brethren, the cardinals, considering that this indulgence is granted not only for the salvation of souls, but for the honor of the saints, would not consent that any should be dispensed from this visitation to their churches.' The number of thirty days was fixed for the Romans, fifteen for the Italians, and ten for other strangers. Clement, whose goodness and courtesy was displayed on all occasions, extended his indulgence to those persons who had been prevented from, or stopped on, their journey, on this condition, that they should give to the church the money they would have expended in it. 'The inhabitants of Rome,' says Villani, 'were exorbitant in their impositions upon these strangers; and used such frauds and monopolies, that, joined to the fatigue and heat, caused a great mortality.' And Meyer, another historian of that age, assures us that, of all these pilgrims, the tenth part never returned to their habitations.

As soon as Petrarch could get out, he visited all the churches with extreme ardor to gain the jubilee. He speaks of the good effects it had upon his soul. 'I went with fervor,' says he, 'determined to put an end to that sinful life which has often covered me with shame, and I hope nothing can make me change the firm resolutions I have taken.'

The rest of his time was much of it spent in all probability with his friend Lelius. After having gained the jubilee, he returned immediately to Padua. He took his route through Tuscany, and stopped at Arezzo, desirous to see the town in which he was born. Aretin says, that his townsmen, charmed with the sight of a man who was such an honor to them, went out to meet him, and paid him the same respect and obeisance they would have done to a king: This was in December, 1350. He had the good fortune to find in this town the Institutions of Quintilian, which till then he could never meet with. The manuscript was mutilated, and in a bad condition: but it was an interesting discovery to him. He wrote some lines to Quintilian to express his joy; in which he tells him plainly, that he was fitter to form great orators, than to be an orator himself.

Some days after this, Petrarch going out of



Arezzo to pursue his journey, the principal people of the city, who accompanied him, led him to Orto, to shew him the house in which he was born. 'It was a little house,' says Petrarch, 'as befitted an exile.' They told him that the proprietor would have made some alterations in it, which the town had always opposed, that the place consecrated by his birth might remain always in the state it was in at that time. He relates this to a person who had written to know whether Arezzo was really the place of his birth; and adds, 'Arezzo has shewn more respect to a stranger than Florence to a citizen.'

Petrarch stopped at Florence to converse with his friends; and went from thence to Padua, where he had fixed his residence. There was great consternation, and an universal lamentation, in this city, which had lost the best of all masters. James de Corrare had in his house a relation called William, whom he treated with kindness, and admitted to his table, though he was unworthy of that favor. The 21st of December, after dinner, when this lord was seated in his palace, surrounded with his friends, servants, and guards, William plunged a dagger into his breast with so much celerity, that no one had time to ward off the

stroke. Some hastened to raise up their lord, who was fallen, and who expired in their arms: the rest pierced the monster with a thousand strokes who had committed this parricide. 'At the same instant,' says Petrarch, 'there went out of this world two souls of a very different kind, and the routes they took were as opposite.' The motive of this action is unknown; but some think James had forbade him to appear abroad on account of his bad conduct.

Petrarch wrote on this occasion the following letter to Boccace:

'I have learnt by long habit to cope with Fortune. I do not oppose her strokes by groans and tears, but by a heart hardened to repel them. She perceived me firm and intrepid, and took a lance to pierce me at the time I lay the most exposed by the death of those friends who had formed a rampart around me. By a sudden, horrible, and unworthy death, she has deprived me of another tender friend, of a man who was my consolation and glory. He was the most like king Robert in his love of letters, and in his favors to those who professed them. He was distinguished for a singular sweetness of manners, and was the father, rather than lord, of his people. I had given myself to



him. While I live I shall never lose the remembrance of James de Corrare, and shall always speak of him with pleasure. I would celebrate him to you, and to posterity; but he is much above my praise.'

The death of James de Corrare rendered Padua disagreeable to Petrarch. The delightful situation of Vacluse presented itself, and he wished once more to behold it. But he continued the winter at Padua. He spent a great deal of his time with Ildebrandin Comti, bishop of that city; a man of high rank and great merit. One day, as he was supping at his palace, two Carthusian monks came there, and were well received by Ildebrandin, who loved their order. He asked them what brought them to Padua. 'We are going,' they said, 'to Treviso, by the order of our general, to establish a monastery; the bishop of that city, and some of its pious inhabitants, desiring to have one of our order.' Ildebrandin, after several more questions, turned the conversation insensibly upon father Gerard, brother to Petrarch, and asked them if he appeared contented with his lot. The two monks, who did not know Petrarch, related wonders of his brother.

'The plague,' said they, 'having got into

the monastery of Montrieu, the prior, a man of exemplary piety, but seized with terror, told his monks that flight was the only part they had to take. Gerard answered with courage, "Go where you please: as to myself, I will remain in the situation in which Heaven has fixed me." The prior redoubled his instances; and, to alarm him, said, "When you are dead, there will be no person to bury you." "That is the last of my cares," said Gerard; "and the affair of my survivors rather than mine." The prior fled to his own country, where death followed, and struck him. Gerard remained in his convent, where the plague respected and left him only, after having destroyed, in a few days, thirty-four of his brethren who continued with him. Gerard paid them every service, received their last sighs, washed their bodies, and buried them when death had taken those destined to this office. With only a dog left for his companion, he watched at night to guard the house, and took his repose in the day. The thieves, with which this country is infested, came several times to pillage this monastery, but he found some means to get rid of them. When the summer was passed, he sent to a neighbouring monastery of the Carthusians, to beg they would give him a monk to take care of



the house; and he went himself to the superior monastery of the Carthusians, where he was received with singular distinction by eighty-three priors, and obtained of them a great favor. They permitted him to choose a prior and monks to renew his house from the different convents of the order; and he returned triumphant, which he merited by his care, fidelity, and prudence.'

While the Carthusians were relating these wonders of father Gerard, the prelate cast his eyes, filled with tears of joy, from time to time, on Petrarch. 'I know not,' says the latter, 'whether my eyes appeared so; but my heart was tenderly moved.' The Carthusians at last discovered him to be the brother of Petrarch, and with a holy effusion embraced him, saying, 'Ah! how happy are you in such a brother!' Petrarch could only answer with his tears: he was touched with this scene beyond expression, as he owns in a letter to his brother, from whence this account is taken.

About this time he made a review of all his manuscripts. Reflecting on the uncertainty of life, and recalling the losses he had sustained in a short time, he thought it necessary to arrange his affairs; like those who, on the evening that precedes a long journey, collect together

what they will take with them, burn the things that are unnecessary, and give the rest to their friends. He found much pleasure in reviewing his sentiments in the different periods of his life. When he discovered how many things he had begun, and left unfinished, he considered such undertakings as a great folly in so short a life, and he threw into the fire directly a thousand epistles and poems on all subjects. 'I charged Vulcan,' says he, 'with the trouble of connecting them. But shall I own my weakness? it was not without sighs.' But recollecting that his dear Socrates had begged of him his prose works, and Barbatus his poetry, he saved the rest. To this we owe the eight books of his familiar subjects, dedicated to Socrates; and the three books of his Latin verses, dedicated to Barbatus, printed in the edition of Bale in 1581, the most complete edition there is of his works. Those he destroyed contained probably a thousand interesting anecdotes of his life. Petrarch writes thus to Socrates on this subject :

'I will not say to my readers as did Apuleius, "Read my works, they will please you;" but you, my dear Socrates, will read them with ardor, and perhaps with pleasure, because you love me. If my style should amuse you, it will be



owing to your friendship, and not to my wit. A woman need not attend the toilette whose lover is to be judge of her beauty. You know I am not eloquent, nor does the epistolary style admit of it. The letters of Cicero are simple, plain, and easy : he reserved for his pleadings the thunders of his eloquence. If you will give me a mark of your friendship, keep these trifles to yourself ; the world will not view them with your candour ; even you must consider my situation. My life is that of a wanderer up and down in the midst of perils, fixed to no certain spot. This manner of life procured me a great number of acquaintance ; of real friends, perhaps, but a few ; but of this we cannot easily judge. This obliged me to write to people of all countries, and of every age and situation, whose characters and manners of thinking were quite opposite. You will therefore find seeming contradictions in these letters ; for the attention of a writer ought to be fixed on the person to whom he writes, on his character and manner of thinking, and how he is likely to be affected with the subject before him. We must not write in the same manner to a brave man and a coward ; to a young man without experience, and to a man of advanced years, who has passed through the difficulties of

life; to a happy man, puffed up with prosperity, and to a wretched one, depressed by adversity; to a man of letters, and to a fool. There is an infinite variety among men, and their minds have as little resemblance as their faces. And were we to write only to one person, we must even then sometimes change our style and manner: a monotony in language will tire at length, as well as an uniformity in our food.

‘ I have suppressed in these letters those minute details which seldom interest those who are not concerned in them. But I am not altogether of the opinion of Seneca, who reproaches Cicero for such details, and who stuffs his own letters with morals and philosophy. I have rather followed the latter, and have mixed simple narrations with moral reflections, in the manner of Cicero. Give these trifles a corner in your cabinet, where they may be sheltered from those daring critics who, without producing any thing of their own, determine with assurance on the works of others.

‘ I have sketched out a picture of myself, which I destine for you. It shall be drawn with care: it will not be, as Cicero says, the Minerva of Phidias; but when I have finished it, it shall not fear the critic. In this review you will be struck with my weakness and



effeminate complaints: you will say, I was a man in youth, and a child in mature age. I complained not, however, like Cicero, of exile, sickness, a sum lost, a payment deferred, or an unjust decision: but when I lost my friends all at once, and the world was to me annihilated, there would have been more insensibility than strength of mind in being unmoved by such afflictions. At present I experience the change that Seneca tells us always befalls the ignorant. Despair has given me courage and tranquillity. Henceforth you shall behold me act, speak, and write, with more vigor. Even a falling world might crush, but it would not intimidate me.

‘I began this letter with the day, and with the day I will end it. I have prolonged my conversation with you, because it is delightful to me thus to enjoy your presence, notwithstanding the seas and the mountains that separate us. Could I procure a tranquil and fixed establishment, I would undertake some considerable work, that I might consecrate it to you. I would fain immortalize your name; but you stand in no need of my praise. Adieu! You are my Idomeneus, my Atticus, my Lucilius!’

Petrarch lodged, when at Padua, in the clois-

ter of St. Justine, close to the church of that monastery, which was built on the ruins of the ancient temple of Concord. Some workmen employed there, found a stone on which was an inscription to the memory of Livy. Petrarch, who idolized this historian, took it into his head to address a letter to him as follows:

‘ I wish I had lived in your age, or rather that you had been born in mine. I should have been among those who went to seek you at Rome, or even in the Indies, had you dwelt there. I can now only behold you in your books; and in them but in part, from the indolence of our age, who have never taken any pains to collect your works. I cannot reflect on this without feeling indignation at my countrymen, who seek after nothing but gold, silver, and the pleasures of sense.

‘ I am under great obligations to you, because you bring me into so much good company. When I read your works, I think I live with Brutus, Regulus, Scipio, the Fabricii, the Camilli; and not with the banditti among whom my unfortunate stars have placed me. Salute on my part, among the ancients, Polybius, Quintus, Claudius, Valerius, and Antias, whose glory was clouded by yours; among the



moderns, Pliny the younger, your neighbour, and Crispus Sallust, your rival; and inform them they have not been more fortunate than you with respect to the preservation of their works.

‘ I write this in the city where you were born and interred, in the vestibule of St. Justine the virgin, and on the stone of your monument.’

Padua was near Venice, and Petrarch went often to that city, which he called the wonder of all cities. He became acquainted with Andrew Dondolo, who was made doge in 1343, though he was but thirty-six years of age, which was an extraordinary thing. But he was a young man of great merit, and joined the talents necessary for governing with an agreeable figure and very enchanting manners. We have seen that he was in the good graces of the beautiful empress of Milan. His mind was cultivated and poetical. He had read the works of our poet, and was charmed with his acquaintance; to obtain which he had made considerable advances, which Petrarch answered with the highest sentiments of esteem and admiration.

The commerce of the Venetians increased under the government of Dondolo: they began at that time to trade to Egypt and Syria,

from whence they brought silk, pearls, aromatic spices, and other commodities of the east. This excited the envy of the Genoese, and a rupture ensued. Petrarch, in a letter to the doge of Genoa, says, ' I am troubled at the situation of your republic. I know the difference there is between the tumult of arms and the tranquillity of Parnassus, and that the lyre of Apollo ill accords with the trumpet of Mars. Hannibal himself said, that a certain peace was to be preferred to an expected victory. What distresses me the most is, that it is Italians you oppose. Would it not be better to wage war against Damas, Susa, or Memphis? Must the destruction of the Theban brothers be renewed in Italy?

' With grief I learn your league with the king of Arragon; and will you seek the aid of a barbarian to destroy your own countrymen? Your enemies, you say, have set the example; they are then equally culpable. Venice calls to her succour the tyrants of the west; Genoa those of the east! Wretches that we are! we buy venal souls to destroy our own children! Nature gave us for barriers the Alps and the two seas; avarice, envy, and pride, have opened these barriers to the Cimbres, the Huns, the Teutons, the Gauls, and the Spaniards. How



often have we recited with tears these lines of Virgil: "Strangers possess these cultivated fields! these harvests are the prey of barbarians!" Behold how discord has reduced the citizens of this wretched country! Athens and Lacedæmon had a rivalry like yours: the latter could have destroyed the former; but, "Heaven forbid," said they, "that we should put out one of the eyes of Greece." A fine answer, worthy of Sparta! In the midst of these agitations I cannot remain silent. While some are dragging along great trees to construct vessels of war, and others are sharpening their swords and their darts, I should think myself culpable if I did not take up my pen, which is my only weapon. I am conscious with what circumspection we ought to speak to our superiors; but the love of one's country is above all: this will plead my cause, and persuade you to pardon my presumption. I will prostrate myself before the chiefs of both nations, and thus beseech them: Throw down your arms, give each other the kiss of peace, unite your hearts, and your colors! Then will the Pontus, the Euxine, and the ocean, be opened to you; and your ships will arrive in safety at Taprobane, the Fortunate Islands, the unknown Thule, and at the Poles! Kings and

people shall go before you: the Indian, the English, and the Ethiopian, shall dread your power. Let peace reign among you, and you will have nothing to fear! Adieu, the greatest of dukes, and the best of men?’

Andrew Dondola, in his answer, speaks thus to Petrarch:

‘The Genoese are not our brothers: they have been guilty of a thousand wrongs to the republic of Venice: they are domestic enemies, and worse they cannot be. They have abused our patience, tarnished the glory of Italy, and debased the diadem of its queen. They have rendered themselves odious to the whole universe. It is not astonishing they cannot agree with others, since they are never in harmony with themselves. We only undertake this war to procure an honorable peace for our country, which is dearer to us than our lives.’

The doge was delighted with the eloquence of Petrarch’s letter, and the depth of his understanding. ‘You are very dear to us,’ said he; ‘but you will be still more so, if you will often regale us with such fine productions!’

The sixth of April this year, 1351, three years after the death of Laura, Petrarch wrote the following lines:



‘ Oh, Love ! who has not proved thy mighty power ? Seek in the earth for my dear treasure that is hidden there ! Seek for that pure and chaste heart which was my sole delight ! Tear from the hands of death what he has forced from me, and fix once more thy precious ensign on her lovely face ! Rekindle that flame which was my guide ; that constant flame, which enlightens me still, though it is extinguished itself.

‘ Never did thirsty stag seek the cooling fountain as I seek what I have lost. Amiable pilgrim ! why did you set out before me ! The empire of death has now lost its hold over me ; for she who bound me to earth is ascended to heaven ! My chains are broken. I am free and miserable !’

In another sonnet he says, ‘ How blest should I have been had I died with Laura !’ But he would not have enjoyed one of the greatest pleasures he met with in the course of his life : his friend Boccace came to him on this day, to inform him he was recalled to his country, and restored to the inheritance of his family.

The friends of Petrarch at last obtained his cause, and sent Boccace with a letter to him from the senate, thus inscribed : ‘ To the re-

verend Signior Francis Petrarch, canon of Padua, crowned poet, our very dear countryman, prior of the arts, and Gonfalonier of Justice to the people of Florence.

‘Illustrious branch of our country! Your name has long sounded in our ears, and touched our hearts. The success of your studies, and that admirable art in which you excel, have decorated you with the laurel, and rendered you worthy to serve as a model to posterity. You will find in the hearts of your countrymen all those sentiments of esteem and friendship you deserve; and, that there may be nothing in your country to give you pain, of your own liberality, and inspired by that paternal tenderness we have always had for you, we return to you, without any exception, the lands of your ancestors, which have been redeemed with the public treasure. The gift is small in itself, and little proportioned to your merit: but it will be enhanced by regard to our laws, our customs, and the recollection of those who have not been able to obtain it. You may now inhabit, when you please, the city in which you was born. We flatter ourselves that, filled with love for your country, you will not go elsewhere to seek the applause that



you merit, and the tranquillity that you desire.

‘ We read admirable things of Virgil, and of some other authors of antiquity, whom even our own age causes us to regret. You will not find among us Cæsars or Mecænases; these are titles unknown to us; but you will find countrymen, zealous for your glory, ardent to publish your praise, and extend your renown; extremely sensible of the honor our city obtains from having produced a man who has no parallel. Antiquity cannot boast, nor will his equal be found in posterity.

‘ We are not ignorant how rare, how splendid is the name of a poet. Ennius called poets holy, and they are in some sort inspired with a divine spirit; for which reason they were crowned, as were the Cæsars and heroes who triumphed. The latter are immortalized by their actions, the former by their works. It is praise-worthy, says Sallust, to do well for the republic, and it is not less so by eloquence to promote its glory. Thus men become illustrious both in war and in peace; and renown, as Lucan says, shelters both the one and the other from the outrages of time. If the soul of Virgil, if the eloquent spirit of Ci-

cero were again to appear in a bodily form among us, we should not venerate them more than we venerate you. Why are men more ready to praise those of whom they only hear, than those who are present with them? You excite our admiration, and we will sing your praise. Who would not be astonished to find so few good writers, and still fewer poets, in that crowd of wits among us who apply to so many different studies? Cicero explains this: It is owing, says he, to the greatness of the object, and the difficulty of success. But you have arrived at it by the strength of your genius, and great application. We have resolved, after mature deliberation, to advance the honor of our city in restoring the sciences and the arts, persuaded that they will give to it, as they did to Rome, a sort of empire over the rest of Italy.

‘What we desire, what was so rare among the ancients, you alone can produce. Your country conjures you, by all that is most sacred, by all the rights she has over you, to consecrate to her your time, to preside over and direct these her studies, that they may excel those of others. You shall make choice of the authors you will explain, and shall act in the manner most suited to your occupations and



your glory. The greatest things have often arose from small beginnings. There are not wanting persons of merit among us, who, under your auspices, will give some poetic works to the public. Finish with us your Africa, that immortal poem; and bring back to us the Muses, whom we have so long neglected. You have wandered long enough about the world: you know the cities and the manners of all nations. It is time for you to settle. Return to your country, which calls you with a loud voice after a long absence; a summons which, perhaps, no one ever received but yourself. Magistrates and people, great and small, desire your presence. Your household gods, your recovered lands, wait for you with impatience. Return to them, return to us. You are dear to us: you will be still dearer, if you comply with our wishes. We have many other things to say, which we have confided to John Boccace, the messenger of these dispatches, to whom we beg you would give the same credit that you would do to ourselves.'

Villani relates, that the plague having depopulated the city of Florence, the inhabitants, to draw men thither, and restore its flourishing state, deliberated about establishing an university, where they should teach all the sciences,

and, above all, theology, and the civil and canon law. In consequence of which they built schools, assigned public funds for them, and called thither the best professors in every branch of study. The pope and the cardinals approved the plan, and granted this university all the privileges of those of Paris, Bologna, &c. The Florentines wished for Petrarch at the head of this establishment, to do them honor, and revive the taste for refined knowledge. And this produced the just restitution of his lands, and the obliging letter they sent him. Petrarch's answer was as follows :

‘ I have lived long enough, my dear countrymen. According to the maxim of the wise man, We should die when we have nothing left us to desire. I have never been ambitious of riches or honors ; of this my whole life has been a sufficient proof. My prayers and my wishes have all centered in being a good man, and in meriting the approbation of worthy persons. If I have not accomplished the first point, your letter, which surprised and rejoiced me, is a proof I am not far from the last.

‘ As Plutarch said to the emperor Trajan, I rejoice in my own happiness, and felicitate you on your virtue. It is a prodigy in an age so deficient in goodness, and astonishing to



find so much of that public (so to speak) popular liberty in that vast body of which your republic is composed.

‘ Illustrious and generous men ! had I been present, could I have desired more than you have granted to me when I was absent, and asked nothing ? Where is the country which has better treated the best of its citizens ? Rome recalled from exile, Cicero, Rutilius, Metellus ; but she had exiled them unjustly. She recalled Camillus, but at a time when she could not do without him. The same reason engaged Athens to recall Alcibiades. But there is no example of an absent citizen’s being recalled voluntarily, but from the motive of service to their country. Augustus restored his land to Virgil : but have we ever seen a public senate restore to the son an inheritance which (for not being claimed at a certain time) was lost by his father ? With how many flatteries, caresses, and soothing entreaties, have you sweetened the restitution of my land, after having purchased it with the money of the public ! When I see it thus dressed out and enriched with the flowers of your eloquence, I envy not the most fertile spots of Africa and Sicily, or those lands of Campania where Ceres and Bacchus contend for the superiority. More

sensibly affected with your flattering address than the services you have done, or wish to do, me, nothing is wanting to my happiness, but to deserve, by my conduct, what I owe to your generosity.

‘It is a great consolation to find myself thus re-established in my country, where my father, my grandfather, and great-grandfather, lived to old age, and distinguished themselves more by their fidelity and their zeal than by the incense of adulation. As to myself, who have flown so far beyond it, on the wings of nature or of fortune, you offer me an asylum where, after so many courses, I may repose in tranquillity. It is a precious gift; but what you have added is more precious still, and will be always a spur which will excite me to virtue and glory.

‘Receive my grateful thanks, such as they are, and impute it to yourselves that they cannot equal your beneficence. I must be much more eloquent than I am, to express an acknowledgment that bears any proportion to your benefits. Whatever I can say will be ever unequal to my wishes. Overwhelmed with your favors, shall I dare to appropriate the answer of Augustus to the senate with tears? Arrived at the completion of my desires, what



can I ask of the gods, but that your good-will may last as long as my life? I recollect that I made this request to those who were at the head of your senate when I returned last year from Rome.

‘John Boccace, the messenger of your letter and your orders, will acquaint you with my projects on my return; I have confided them to him. I beg you to consider what he shall say on my part, as if I spoke it myself.

‘Heaven grant that your republic may be always flourishing!’

Notwithstanding this letter, Petrarch formed the design of going to Avignon and Vacluse, and gives these reasons for it in a letter to one of his friends:

‘What can I alledge as an excuse for the variation of my soul, but that love of solitude and repose so natural to me? Too much known, too much sought, in my own country, praised and flattered even to disgust, I seek a corner where I may live unknown, and without glory. Nothing appears to me so desirable as a tranquil and solitary life. My desert of Vacluse presents itself with all its charms. Its hills, its fountains, and its woods, so favorable to my studies, possess my soul with a sweet emotion I cannot describe. I am no longer astonished that Camillus, that

great man whom Rome exiled, sighed after his country, when I feel that a man born on the banks of the Arno regrets a situation beyond the Alps. Habit is a second nature ; and this solitude, from the strength of habit, is become as my country. What engages me the most is, that I reckon upon finishing there some works I have begun. I am desirous to revisit my books, to draw them out of the boxes in which they are enclosed, that they may again see the light, and behold the face of their master. In fine, if I fail in the promise I have given my friends at Florence, they ought to pardon me, since it is the effect of that variation attached to the human mind, from which no one is exempted, but those perfect men who never lose sight of the sovereign good.'

Petrarch set out from Padua the third of May, 1351, and brought with him his son, whom he had taken from the school of Parma. 'I took him with me,' said he, 'that his presence might animate me to do him every good office. What would have become of this child if he had had the misfortune to lose me?' He arrived at Vicenza at the setting of the sun. He hesitated whether he should stop there, or proceed farther. Some persons of merit he met with, determined him to stay,



They entered into conversation, and night came on without Petrarch's perceiving it. 'I have often proved,' says he, 'that our friends are the greatest thieves of our time: but ought we to complain of this robbery, or can we make a better use of it than to pass it with them?' The conversation fell upon Cicero. Every one spoke as he thought of this great man. Petrarch, having praised his genius and eloquence, said something of his fickleness of character, and the inconstancy of his mind. Perceiving his friends astonished, he drew from his portmanteau two letters, in one of which he praises his genius, in the other criticises his character.

Most of the company were convinced of the justice of the criticism, except one old man. 'Ah! gentlemen,' says he, 'for mercy speak with more respect of so great a man: spare me the grief of hearing any thing said against him.' When they asked him if he thought Cicero incapable of erring, he shut his eyes, shook his head, and again repeated, 'What a misery for me to hear Cicero blasphemed!' 'You consider him then as a god,' said Petrarch. 'Yes,' replied he, without hesitation; 'he is the god of eloquence.' 'You are then right,' replied Petrarch; 'if he is a god, he cannot err: but I

confess, this is the first time I ever heard Cicero turned into a deity. After all, since he deifies Plato, I do not see why you are to blame for doing the same by him, if our religion permitted us to multiply gods at our pleasure.' 'I do but joke,' said the old man: 'I know well that Cicero was a man; but agree with me that his mind was divine.' 'Very true,' said Petrarch; 'you are now in the right: you speak like Quintilian, who called Cicero a heavenly man. It is sufficient, however, that he was a man liable to err, and errors you must own he committed.' At these words the old man gnashed his teeth as if they had attacked his honor!

Petrarch's letters to Cicero united are as follows:

'I have read your works with avidity, which, after a long search, I found at last. You say a great deal, complain very much, and often change your manner of thinking. I know already what you taught to others; I know at present what you think yourself. Wherever you are, listen to the most zealous of your admirers. It is not advice I mean to offer; it is a complaint dictated by sentiment, and mixed with sorrow.

'Restless and unhappy old man! What do you mean by so many quarrels and contentions?



And why do you sacrifice to these a repose so much better suited to your rank and your age? What false idea of glory has precipitated your grey hairs into those wars which suit none but young men, and caused you to end your life in a manner unworthy of a philosopher? Forgetting your advice to your brothers, and the precepts you gave your disciples, you are fallen into the very precipice you cautioned them to avoid. I speak not now of Dionysius, of your brother, of your grandson, or of Dolabella. Sometimes you praised them to the skies; sometimes you overwhelmed them with reproaches. I would be silent also concerning Cæsar, whose clemency was a certain port for all those who attacked him; and Pompey, to whom your intimacy gave you a right to speak freely. But why that violence against Anthony? Without doubt, we must attribute it to your zeal for your sinking country. But what then could be the motive of your secret union with Augustus? You know what your own Brutus said of you: "Cicero does not dislike a master; he would only have one that suits him."

'How I lament for you, my dear Cicero! I pity, but I blush for your errors: I say with Brutus, "Of what use are so many talents, and

so much knowledge? Why does he speak so well of virtue, and so seldom adhere to its laws?" Would it not better suit a philosopher, like you, to renounce the fasces, the honors of a triumph, and those pursuits against Cataline, which inspired you with so much vanity, to pass a tranquil old age at your villa, more occupied (as you speak yourself) with the future than with the present, which will swiftly pass away? Adieu for ever! my dear Cicero. I write from the other side the Po, on the borders of the Adige to the right, in the colony of Verona, the 12th of May, 1345, from the birth of him with whom you are not acquainted.'

One of Petrarch's friends begged these reflections on Cicero, to examine them at his leisure, that he might form a clear judgment of them. Petrarch willingly consented, saying, 'I wish I may be found to have mistaken his character.'

Petrarch set out the next day for Verona, where he proposed only a short stay: but Azon de Corregge, William de Pastrengo, and some other friends, detained him the whole month. 'The prayers of my friends,' says he, 'are so many bonds on my affection. Nothing can be



sweeter than friendship. I have only to complain of being loved too much for my repose.' Before he departed from Verona, he wrote the following letter to Boccace :

' You know, my dear friend, and every one knows, that, all things considered, if I was my own master, I should fix my residence at Vaucluse, and pass the rest of my days in that obscure retreat. Though deprived of that agreeable superfluity with which cities abound, it contains liberty, leisure, repose, and solitude ; four things necessary to my happiness. It has, however, two great faults : it is too far from Italy, to which I am drawn by nature ; and too near that Western Babylon, which I detest like Tartarus. But, to pass over these objections, there are things I cannot commit to paper which will prevent my making a long stay at Vaucluse, unless something unforeseen happens. I cannot tell what : I only know there is nothing but may befall an animal frail and mortal as man is, so insolent even in the depth of misery.

' My project then is to go and visit the Roman pontiff on the borders of the Rhone, whom our ancestors went to adore on the banks of the Tiber, and whom our successors

will perhaps seek on the borders of the Tagus. Time changes all things: all things follow its passing stream.'

But this is the affair of that holy fisherman who, acquainted with the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Tagus, chose the Tiber to affix there his vessels and his nets. It is the affair of the pilot whose ship is agitated by the tempest, and of those who direct its helm. We are only passengers, who run the same hazards with them, without being responsible for their errors. I will then seek him where I may, whom I cannot find where I would; and, after having taken a last leave of some friends who remain to me, I will fly, as Virgil says, from barbarous lands, and an inhospitable shore: I will go and settle at my fountain, in the midst of my woods, books, and gardens, which have expected me above four years: I will pass the remainder of the summer in retirement. If I was to betake myself to my ancient wanderings, I should fear for my health from the excessive heats, though accustomed to suffer much from my childhood. The next autumn I hope at least to return to Italy with my books, which will enrich my Italian library. These are my intentions, and I thought it right to inform you of them. Present my homage to our



senate. You know how much I owe it. Say a thousand things for me to those three dear and virtuous countrymen whose image and conversation I carry every where with me.'

In June, 1351, Petrarch went through Mantua to Parma. He stayed here but a few days, for the friends he had here were dead. From thence he went to Plaifance, where, finding a conveyance to Avignon, he wrote to Socrates, to acquaint him with his approach, and desire him to be at Vacluse to meet him. At mount Genevre, one of the Alps, he wrote these lines to John de Arezzo. 'Padua has taken from me the man who was all my joy and consolation; I have nothing to inform you of that can make you laugh. I seek with ardor for something that may produce that effect on me. It should seem that antiquity was more grave and serious, our age more gay and comic. Great affairs render men serious; it is only trifles that amuse and make them laugh. I am persuaded that Cassius would have laughed often if he had lived among us: and Democritus would have died with laughter, could he have compared his own age with ours. We see nothing now but mad old men, doting old women, and young ones either foolish or extravagant. We should have had a fine tete-a-tete

of laughing at them all. My letter, for its narrow scrawling figure, perfectly resembles the strait passage of the Alps from whence I write it. I flatter myself that you will soon follow me. I would rather have had you for the companion of my journey, as I have often had before ; but no pleasure is durable. I shall expect you at the fountain of Vacluse, a place always agreeable and charming, but in summer it is the Elysian fields. We will breathe a little there, before we proceed to Babylon, that gulph of Tartarus.'—From the top of mount Genevre, June.

Petrarch arrived at Vacluse the 27th of June : his first care was to notify his arrival to Philip de Cabaffole, bishop of Cavaillon. He wrote to him these lines :

‘ Vacluse is ever to me the most agreeable situation in the world, and which best suits my studies. I went there when a child : I returned again when a youth ; and in manhood I passed in that retreat some of the choicest years of my life. I would, if possible, live here in old age, and die in your dominions. I am so impatient to see you after so long an absence, that, when I have wiped off the dust of my journey, and bathed myself in the water of the Sorgia, I will come immediately to Cavail-



lon.' A short time after his arrival, Petrarch says, in a letter to Boccace, 'I promised to return in autumn, but how can we judge at a distance? Time, place, and friendship, make us change our resolutions: the gladiator can only determine his fate in the amphitheatre. By what appears, I have business cut out for me during the space of two years in this country: my friends must therefore pardon me if I do not keep my word; the inconstancy of the human mind must be my apology.' Having passed a month at Vacluse, to refresh himself after his journey, Petrarch went to visit the pope and the cardinals at Avignon.

The court of Avignon was at this time in its greatest lustre. The viscountess of Turenne continued to have the same ascendant as ever, disposed of every thing, and lived in the greatest splendor. Eleanor, her younger sister, was just married to William Roger, count of Beaufort, nephew of the pope, to whom the viscountess had sold the viscounty of Turenne on this marriage. It was celebrated with a magnificence which answered to the quality of the persons, and the taste of Clement: and the arrival of king John of France increased its eclat. This prince had just succeeded Philip de Valois, and immediately after his consecration he came

to Avignon, to thank the pope for an essential service he had rendered him, and which is a memorable event in the history of France. Humbert, the dauphin of Viennois, whom Petrarch had reproached for his effeminacy, was a widower, and had no children. His dominions were very commodious for the king of France, and he had ceded them to him in 1343, and renewed the cessation to Charles the dauphin : but, always restless and unquiet, he wanted to break through this treaty, and sometimes he thought of marrying again. To put this entirely out of his power, and bind him to his contract, the pope, after having obliged him to take the habit of St. Dominique, conferred on him all the sacred orders on Christmas-day, 1350 ; the under deacon at the midnight mass, the deacon at the mass said at break of day, and the priesthood at the third mass. Eight days after, he consecrated him bishop and patriarch of Alexandria. By this means the dauphin was reunited to the crown ; and it was an article in the treaty, that the eldest son of the king, and the presumptive heir of his crown, should from that time have the title of the Dauphin.

King John resided at Villeneuve, which is only separated from Avignon by the Rhone.



Continual feasts were celebrated on this occasion ; and, by his orders, a grand tournament, at which, says an ancient historian of Tholouse, all the Roman court were present.

King John, to express his gratitude to Clement for this important service, granted to William de Beaufort, and his posterity, the first privileges and appeals in the viscounty of Turenne ; and stood godfather to Joan, his sister, to whom he assigned five hundred livres yearly ; a very considerable sum at that time. At this time the pope made a promotion of the twelve new cardinals, to fill the places of those who died of the plague. Among these the two cardinals of the crown were, for France, Gille Rigaud, abbe of St. Dennis, to whom at Paris the pope sent the hat by one of his nephews, (a favor at that time without example.) The other, for Spain, was Gille Alvari, archbishop of Toledo, who had great concern afterwards in the affairs of Italy. The pope was reproached for admitting many young men into the sacred college, because related to him, who lived most dissolute lives. Pierre Roger, the pope's nephew, seems to be particularly referred to, who was only eighteen years of age when his uncle gave him the hat. But it was universally agreed he led a very exemplary life. He became af-

terwards, under the name of Gregory XI. one of the greatest popes that ever governed the church; and he re-established the holy see at Rome. There were two of these cardinals who eclipsed all the rest by their birth, their alliances with the greatest princes of Europe, their credit, their magnificence, the splendor of their court, and the superiority of their knowledge. These were Gui de Boulogne and Elie de Taillerand. The former we are acquainted with; the latter was of the illustrious house of Pengord: he had principally applied to the study of the law, and was esteemed very skilful in it. Petrarch says of him, that he was one of the brightest luminaries of the church. He was only thirty years of age when he was made cardinal. He had great influence in the election of Clement, and no person had more credit or authority in the sacred college. 'It is more honorable,' says Petrarch, speaking of him again, 'to make popes, than to be a pope oneself.' He was reckoned insolent and proud; and some have accused him of cruel and bloody actions.

Petrarch was more attached to the two cardinals I have mentioned than any others; and wrote a letter to the bishop of Cavaillon, to thank him for his recommendation to them. In it he says, 'They are the two strongest



rowers of the apostolic bark.' Three great affairs at this time occupied the court of Rome: the enterprize of the lords of Milan, which they meant to suppress; the war between the kings of Naples and Hungary, which they desired to end; and the troubles of Rome, which it was necessary to appease. After the fall of Rienzi, the pope had again established the ancient form of government under senators and a legate. When the latter quitted Rome, the same disorders and violences arose as before, which encouraged the remaining partisans of Rienzi. In this situation of affairs, the pope named four cardinals to deliberate on the means of reforming this city, and making choice of that government that should best effect it. The cardinal de Boulogne desired Petrarch to give his sentiments of this important affair. After speaking in the highest terms of the sacred respect due to the city of Rome, as the centre of the faith, and the seat of empire, he writes as follows:

'What has been the foundation of all its quarrels and miseries? I wish to Heaven it may not be found, ancient pride, joined to modern tyranny. An effeminate, presuming, and disdainful nobility undertakes to abuse an humbled and unfortunate people. They would

bind Romans to their car, and lead them in triumph, as if they were Carthaginians or Cambrians. Did any one ever hear of a triumph over citizens? Is there any law to authorise such an attempt?

‘That I may not be suspected of speaking from any secret animosity, I ought to say, that, of the two families who have been thought to give rise to this charge, I never hated the one; the other I have loved, respected, and served with affection. The family of no prince is so dear to me. But Rome, Italy, the liberties of good men, are dearer still; and, to speak the truth, is what I owe to the living as well as to the dead. Behold this great city, destined by God to be the head of the church, and of the world, behold it torn in pieces: not, as formerly, by its own hands, but by strangers from the Rhine, whose tyranny has reduced it to the most deplorable state. How are we fallen! Great God! cast on us, though we deserve it not, an eye of pity and of mercy! Alas! who would have thought that it should be our misery to have it debated before the vicar of Jesus Christ, and before the successors of his apostles, whether Roman citizens were to be admitted into the senate, when strangers, when new Tarquins, display their pride in the capi-



tol? This, however, is the question which employs the four pillars of the church.

‘If I am asked, I hesitate not to say, that the Roman senate ought to be formed of none but Roman citizens: and that not only strangers, but even the Latins, ought to be excluded. Manlius Torquatus should decide this question. When the Latins demanded a consul and senators of their nation, this great man, full of indignation, swore that he would never come into the senate without a poignard, which he would plunge into the breast of the first Latin who should dare to appear there. To what was this refusal owing, but because they would not grant to power or fortune, what was only due to service and to merit? But for this, Macedonians and Carthaginians formerly, and all the nations under the sun at present, might pretend to this privilege. But some will say, We are Roman citizens. Ah! that they would prove themselves so, by being the guardians, and not the oppressors, of their fellow-citizens. But can they call themselves so who disdain the very name of men, and aim at nothing but the pompous titles of lords and princes? Will they build their claim upon their nobility or riches? In what the first consists is a question; for if not in virtue, it is a false

idea. As to the last, they have drawn them from the church, their mother; let them use them, therefore, with moderation, as a fleeting good; but not to condemn the poor, or ruin that dear country from whose liberality they hold them. But to govern well, is it necessary to be rich? Was Valerius Publicola rich when he joined Brutus to expel the Tarquins? Was he not buried at the expence of the public, after having vanquished the Tuscans and the Sabines? Was Menenius Agrippa rich, when, by his eloquence, he reunited those fomented spirits who threatened the republic with a fatal schism? or Quintus Cincinnatus, when he quitted his little field to head the army, and become consul of Rome? Curius and Fabricius, were they rich when they fought Pyrrhus and the Samnites? Regulus, when he vanquished the Carthaginians? Appius Claudius, when he governed the republic, though deprived of sight? I should never finish was I to bring all the examples that Rome furnishes of a glorious poverty.

‘ Virtue, (I fear not to say it,) virtue has not a greater enemy than wealth. It was that which conquered Rome, after Rome had conquered the world. Every foreign vice entered



into that city by the same door at which poverty went out of it. Shall we say that from pride, and not riches, arises the desire of dominion? This also was the pest of ancient Rome: but it was then, and will now, I trust, be suppressed by your decisions. In the first ages of the republic, the people demanded magistrates to defend that liberty which they found was invaded by the great. The nobles opposed this with all their might. To this was owing their first retreat to the sacred mount. The rights of the people prevailed over the pride of the nobles; and, notwithstanding their opposition, tribunes were created, the first public rampart against the violences of the senate. After this there was a new dispute; the nobility would not permit marriages between the patricians and plebeians: thus breaking asunder the strongest bond of union between one another, they divided the city into two parties: but the people obtained a law which should render marriages free, without any limitation. However, the former continued only to take from the Patrician families their first magistrates. The people saw they were mocked; they therefore demanded, and obtained, these offices: a small fact in itself, but which Livy

thought worthy of recital, as a proof of the pride of the nobles, and the glorious liberty of the people.

‘ Cneius Flavius, the son of a scribe, a man of low extraction, but sharp wit, and excellent speech, was made edile. The nobles, enraged at the elevation of such a man, laid down their ornaments of dignity. Flavius was not moved by this: he opposed the greatest firmness to their pride. One day, when he went to see his colleague, who was sick, the young patricians who were there would not deign to rise and salute him. When he perceived this, he ordered his chair of state to be brought, sat down in it, and looking down on them from this elevated seat, he returned them disdain for disdain; while they sat on their stools, consumed with rage and jealousy. This instance, in my esteem, proved him worthy of being consul.

‘ After many and violent contests, a patrician and plebeian consul were seen seated together, and dividing the government of Rome. If these things are true, and to be found in our best historians, follow the happy example of those illustrious times, when Rome, rising out of nothing, as it were, was elevated almost to heaven. It is not to be doubted but that city contains a great number of citizens, superior in



birth and merit to those strangers who, on the strength of name alone, despise both heaven and earth. Were they virtuous, I would allow them to be noble; but Rome would never acknowledge them to be Romans: and were they both, they ought not to be preferred to our ancestors, the founders of this empire. What do the poor people demand? Only that they may not be treated in their own city as exiles, and excluded the public administration as if they had the plague. Can any thing be more just?

‘ On this occasion it may be well to follow the counsel of Aristotle, and imitate those who undertake to straighten a crooked tree. Oblige those noble strangers not only to divide with the Romans the senatorship, and the other charges they have usurped, but even to give them up, till, the republic having taken a contrary bend, things shall insensibly return back to their former equality.

‘ This is my advice; this is what I supplicate you to do; and what Rome, sinking under her calamities, begs of you with weeping eyes. If you do not endeavour to re-establish her liberty, she summonses you before the awful tribunal of the Sovereign Judge. Jesus Christ, who is in the midst of you when assembled, commands

you. St. Peter and St. Paul, who have inspired the pope to name you above others, desire it of you immediately. Listen to their secret petitions, and you will pay no regard to outward solicitations. Be only occupied with what will benefit Rome, Italy, the world, and yourselves. Our sins have rendered us little worthy of your protection : but the feat of the apostles deserves to be sheltered from the violence of tyrants ; the temples of the saints ought to be forced from those robbers who have invaded them ; that holy land, sprinkled with the blood of so many martyrs, merits surely to be saved from the blood of its citizens, which will be inevitably spilled, if you do not take some methods to suppress the fury of these tyrants.'

This letter of Petrarch's was addressed to the four first cardinals.

The decision in consequence of this letter of Petrarch's to the four commissary cardinals is not certain, as the pope soon after this fell sick. It is probable this affair was not determined. The people of Rome themselves, wearied out with the anarchy in which they lived, assembled together, and elected John Cerroni, investing him with an absolute authority. He was a good citizen, wise and prudent, and respected for his probity. The nobles did not



dare to oppose this, and it was confirmed by the pope's vicar.

The next affair in debate at Avignon was the enterprize of John Visconti, the brother and successor of Luchin. He was archbishop, as well as governor, of Milan, and he aimed at being master of all Italy. The pope on this sent a nuncio to re-demand the city of Bologna, which he had purchased; and to choose whether he would possess the spiritual or the temporal power; for both could not be united. The archbishop, after hearing the message with respect, said he would answer it the following Sunday at the cathedral. The day came; and, after celebrating mass in his pontifical robes, he advanced towards the legate, requiring him to repeat the orders of the pope on the choice of the spiritual or the temporal: then taking the cross in one hand, and drawing forth a naked sword with the other, he said, 'Behold my spiritual and my temporal; and tell the holy father from me, that with the one I will defend the other.'

The pope, not content with this answer, commenced a process against him, and summoned him to appear in person, on pain of excommunication. The archbishop received the brief, and promised to obey it. Imme-

diately he sent to Avignon one of his secretaries, ordering him to retain for his use all the houses and stables that he could hire at Avignon, with provisions for the subsistence of twelve thousand horse, and six thousand foot. The secretary executed his commission so well, that the strangers who came to Avignon on business could find no place to lodge in. The pope being informed of this, asked the secretary if the archbishop required so many houses. The latter answered, he feared those would not be sufficient; because his master was coming with eighteen thousand troops, besides a great number of the inhabitants of Milan, who would accompany him. The pope, terrified at this account, paid immediately the expence the secretary had been at, and dismissed him, with orders to tell the archbishop that he dispensed him from this journey.

There is another anecdote related of this prince; and they all serve to shew his artful character, and with what apparent modesty and submission he covered his pride and resolution. The cardinal de Ceccano, going on his legateship to Rome, passed by Milan. The archbishop went out to meet him with so numerous and splendid a train, and so many led horses richly harnessed, that, in surprise, he said,



to him, 'Mr. Archbishop, why all this pomp?' 'It is,' replied he, affecting an humble air, and a soft tone of voice, 'to convince the holy father that he has under him a little priest who can do something.'

There was an anonymous letter that was also attributed to this prince; but it appears more likely to have been written by Petrarch, from the style of irony that runs through it. One day, when the pope was in full consistory, a cardinal, who is not named, let this letter fall in so cunning a manner, that it was brought to the pope, who ordered it to be read in the presence of all the court. The inscription was in these terms:

'Leviathan, prince of darkness, to pope Clement his vicar, and to the cardinals his counselors and good friends.'

After an enumeration of very dreadful crimes, which Leviathan ascribes to this corrupt court, and on which he makes them great compliments, exhorting them to continue in this noble course, that they may more and more merit his protection; he inveighs against the doctrine of the apostles, and turns their plain and sober life into the highest ridicule. 'I know,' says he, 'that, so far from imitating, you have their piety and humility in horror and

derision. I have no reproach to make you on this account, but that your words do not always correspond with your actions. Correct this fault, if you wish to be advanced in my kingdom.' He concludes thus: 'Pride, your superb mother, salutes you; with your sisters Avarice, Lewdness, and the rest of your family; who make every day new progress under your encouragement and protection. Given from our centre of hell, in the presence of all the devils.' The pope and the cardinals took little notice of this letter, and continued the same course of life.

The third affair at the court of Avignon, was the peace between Hungary and Naples. Petrarch was particularly interested in this affair, from respect to king Robert, regard to queen Joan, and friendship for the grand senechal of that kingdom, who became his second Mecænas. His name was Nicholas Acciajoli; his family was originally of Brixia, and obtained its name from a commerce in nets. It afterwards divided into several branches, which spread abroad to Sicily, England, Hungary, and even to Constantinople. One of these branches was established at Florence, and held a distinguished rank there, without abandoning the commerce it was engaged in. From this



branch descended Nicholas Acciajoli. At eighteen he married Margarita Spini, of a rich and illustrious family; and three years after his father sent him to Naples, where he had established a branch of his commerce, which succeeded so well, that he was able, whenever he wanted them, to lend large sums of money to king Robert. His son Nicholas had not his taste for commerce; he was very handsome, had a fine figure, and an amiable disposition; but his mind was filled with ambition, and his head turned on chivalry. He happened to please Catharine de Valois, the widow of Philip, prince of Tarentum, whom they called the empress of Constantinople; a woman of gallantry, according to Villani, and of very indifferent reputation. She was one of those who contributed to the death of prince Andrew. The handsome Florentine gained so much favor with this princess, that she confided to him the care of her affairs, the education of her children, and the government of her state. Villani says, she made him a rich and powerful chevalier. Lewis de Tarentum, son of Catharine, having been sent on an expedition into Calabria, at the head of five hundred horse, king Robert gave him Nicholas for governor, with orders to do nothing without consulting

him. The young Florentine executed this commission in a manner that did him great honor, and gained him the good graces of his pupil, who became extremely attached to him.

After the death of king Andrew, he contributed to the marriage of Prince Lewis with queen Joan, who was too fond of her to act with the resolution necessary to accomplish it himself. On the arrival of the king of Hungary, having been prevented following the queen his wife, he threw himself with Nicholas Acciajoli into a small fisher-boat, in which, with great peril coasting the shore, they got to Ercole, and from thence to Sienna. Nicholas set out with the prince for Florence, where his brother was bishop; but when they entered the confines of the republic, the officers of the government stopped them, fearing to offend the king of Hungary, and they retired to an estate which belonged to the house of Acciajoli. Nicholas got together all the money he could, and they embarked in two Genoese galleys, with the bishop of Florence, for Aigues Mortes, where they landed, and proceeded to Villeneuve, a town only separated from Avignon by the Rhone. Nicholas and the bishop went immediately to the pope, to inform him of the prince's arrival, and to concert with him the



means of delivering the queen from the castle of Aix, where the people kept her as a prisoner. By means of the pope, and the duke of Berri, who happened to be at Avignon, and who assured the people of Provence she had no design against them, which was their pretence for detaining her, she obtained her liberty, and was received at Avignon with the usual honors paid to crowned heads. She made her entry there under a canopy of state, surrounded with eighteen cardinals, and several prelates, who went out to meet her. The pope received her in full consistory, according to the general custom of receiving princes : and the prince of Tarentum, through the interest of the Acciajolis, was better treated than he hoped for. The pope granted him the necessary dispensations for his marriage, touched probably with the situation of the queen, who was big with child.

During these things the king of Hungary had been driven from Naples by the plague ; and the Neapolitans, who loved their sovereign, and detested the Hungarians, invited her to return with her husband. Nicholas Acciajoli was sent thither to examine how things were situated, and prepare every thing necessary for their reception. When he came there, he en-

gaged in the queen's service that famous duke Warner who had served the king of Hungary at the head of twelve hundred men, and was not satisfied with his former master. Finding every thing well disposed to the queen, he pressed her to set out immediately for Naples. But money was wanting for this purpose; and this determined her to sell the city of Avignon to the pope for four score thousand florins. This sum not being sufficient, she pawned her jewels; and, having collected a little army in haste, she embarked at Marseilles with her husband, and arrived at Naples in August, where she was received with transport. She loaded all those with benefits who had given her proofs of zeal and fidelity. Nicholas Acciajoli had the office of grand senechal, and the administration of public affairs, as a reward for his great services. There were, however, many troops in garrison in several of the principal towns; and war was carried on between these and the Neapolitans, till the king of Hungary, returning to Naples in 1350, became again conqueror; and Joan and her husband were obliged to take refuge at Gaiette, waiting for the negotiations of the pope to procure peace. At first, as we have seen, the king of Hungary would not hear of it: but at last,



whether he was weary of war at such a distance from his kingdom, and which had cost him so much, or whether his resentment was abated with time, or out of complaisance for the pope, whom he regarded, he consented to a truce, on condition that if, after a process, the queen was found guilty, she should be deprived of her kingdom: if innocent, he promised to restore all the places he possessed belonging to her, on the payment of three hundred thousand florins for the expence of the war.

The process of Joan was not easy to determine. There were many depositions against her, but no witnesses. At last an expedient was found to finish it. Joan proved, by the deposition of several persons, that they had given her a charm, which had inspired her with such an extreme aversion for her husband, that the persons attached to her thought it would be serving her to put him to death; and that she had been thus influenced towards it, without being culpable. On this deposition the judges declared her innocent of the witchcraft and its consequences. The king of Hungary, quite tired out, agreed to a decision worthy of the age in which it was invented. The peace was signed at Avignon this year, 1352, by the ambassadors of the two powers, and ratified by the

pope. He acknowledged Lewis de Tarentum king of Naples, and gave orders for his coronation, but that he should claim no right to the crown. This gave the greatest joy to Nicholas Acciajoli, who might be said to have put the crown of Naples on the head of his pupil, by first accomplishing this marriage, then supporting him by his valor and skilful management, and protecting and befriending him in his greatest adversities. The union of Petrarch with the grand senechal seems to have been formed by Boccace, Zanobie, and the prior of the Holy Apostles, friends to both.

Petrarch wrote a letter to him on this event as follows :

‘ Illustrious man ! At last victory is yours ! Thanks to your zeal, your prince shall be enthroned, notwithstanding the efforts of envy. The lustre of his crown, and the serenity of his countenance, are going to dissipate the clouds with which Italy is covered. After so many labours and perils, do not think you may repose. What remains for you to do, is far more difficult and more important than what you have done. You must collect all the strength of mind you are known to possess, to govern that kingdom with justice which you have acquired with glory. You have struggled with



fortune in adversity, and have been victor : you must now combat her in prosperity. She is the same enemy ; her appearance is only changed ; and she is more difficult to subdue under the form of an enchantress than any other. She has conquered mighty heroes ! Hannibal, who overcame at Canna, was enslaved by pleasure at Capua.

‘ Your prince is young : but his understanding is ripe, and he promises great things. After having weathered a thousand tempests by sea and by land, and conducted him over rocks and precipices to the utmost point of greatness, teach him to preserve the dignity he has acquired, and prove that the sceptre, hereditary in his family, was due to his virtue more than his birth. It is more honorable to be raised than born to a throne ; hazard bestows the one, but merit obtains the other. Teach him to serve his God, to love his country, and to render exact justice, without which no kingdom can endure. Let him accustom himself to desire nothing but honor, and to fear nothing but shame. Let him know that the higher he is elevated, the less he can be concealed ; that the more power he has, the less he ought to allow himself ; and that a king should be distinguished by his manners more than by his

robes. Keep him at a distance in general from the extremes either of prodigality or avarice; virtue lies between them both. Nevertheless, he should be sparing of his time, and profuse of his private money, that it may circulate in his kingdom, and not lie useless in his treasury. The master of a rich estate can never be poor. Let him never forget the speech of that Roman, "I will not have any gold; but "I love to reign over those who have." Let him not think himself happy, or a true king, till he has relieved his kingdom from its calamities, repaired its ruins, extinguished tyranny, and re-established peace and freedom. Sallust says, that a kingdom ought to be always present to the mind of its master. The surest guard of kings is not armies and treasures, but friends; and they are only acquired by beneficence and justice. We must deliberate before we choose them," says Seneca: "but when once chosen, place in them an entire confidence."

'It is important, but not easy, to distinguish a true friend from an agreeable enemy: just praises are spurs to virtue, but flatteries are a subtle poison. We should not break lightly with a friend, nor of a sudden. According to the old proverb, We must unrip, not tear away. It is an error to suppose we shall be



loved by those to whom we are not attached, and an injustice to exact from them more than we can give. Nothing is freer than the heart: it will bear no yoke; it knows no master, but Love. Never suffer your king to open his soul to suspicion, or lend his ear to informers: but let him despise slanderers, and confound them by the virtue of his conduct! Augustus wrote thus to Tiberius; "Let us permit men to speak evil of us; is it not sufficient that they cannot do it? Does the power of God himself shelter him from the blasphemies of the impious?" Let him permit others to seek to divine his secrets; but never let him seek to divine the secrets of others. Let him really be what he would appear; then will he have no interest to hide; and will no more fear the observations of his enemy than the regards of his friend. Scipio brought into his camp with the same confidence the spies of the Romans and Carthaginians. Julius Cæsar sent back Domitius, after taking him prisoner; despised Labienus, the deserter, though acquainted with his secrets; and often burnt the dispatches of the enemies without reading them.

'The title of serenissime is given to kings, to teach them that their rank places them above the seat of the passions, and that they

ought to be inaccessible to all the tempests they raise. Nothing is more dangerous than a king who deceives; nothing more ridiculous for himself, or more fatal to his subjects. On his word is established their hope and tranquillity. Why should he be false, whose interest it is that all under him should be true? Nor let him be ungrateful: for ingratitude destroys the very sinews of a state. He ought to refuse himself to no one. Teach him that he is not born for himself, but for the republic; and that he is in his proper employment when occupied with the affairs of his subjects. He must work for their happiness, and watch for their preservation. There is nothing more glorious; but nothing is more toilsome. It is a delightful and honorable servitude. Prompt to recompence, slow to punish, a good king ought to treat criminals as a good surgeon treats his patients, with all the care and tenderness possible, shedding tears for the pain he is obliged to give. A king must not punish a guilty subject as he would a proud enemy; but ever have this maxim engraved on his heart, "Clemency and virtue assimilate to God."

\* In fine, a king ought to serve as the model of his subjects. By his character they ought to regulate their own. He is responsible for



all the crimes they commit after his example. Let your prince be irreproachable in his manners. Teach him to despise luxury, and trample voluptuousness under his feet. Let him suffer no debauchery in his kingdom, and, above all, in his armies. Horses, books, and arms, these ought to be his amusements; war, peace, and justice, his occupations. Let him read the lives of illustrious men, that he may form himself after them. He should consider them as his models and guides in the path to glory. Their great actions will warm his soul, and spur him on to the like. O, how glorious is that ambition that springs from virtue! You may present to your prince a pattern of every virtue without going far. If love does not blind me, I know no one more perfect than that of his uncle, the divine king Robert; whose death has proved, by the calamities that have followed it, how necessary his life was to his people. He was great, wise, kind, and magnanimous! In a word, he was the king of kings! His nephew can do nothing better than tread in his steps.

‘ You feel, my lord, the burden with which you are charged; but a great man finds nothing hard or weighty when he is sure he is beloved. At the head of your pupil’s counsels,

the confidant of all his secrets, you are as dear to him as Chiron was to Achilles, as Achates to Æneas, and as Lelius to Scipio. Complete what you have begun. Love accomplishes all things; he who partakes the honor should participate in the labour. Adieu! You are the glory of our country, and of your own. I have said a great deal; but I have left much more unsaid.'

Petrarch made use of the same courier to answer a letter of Barbatus de Sulmone, who lamented he had not found him at Rome when he went to gain the jubilee, and begged he would send him his Africa. ' You speak of our not meeting at Rome as a misfortune; I hold it to have been providential. If we had met in that great city, we should have been more occupied with the arts and the sciences than with our souls; and should have sought to ornament our understandings rather than to purify our hearts. The sciences are most agreeable food for the mind: but what a void do they leave in the heart, if they are not directed to their true and perfect end! As to my Africa, if it ever sees the day, it shall visit you; but it has languished of late through the negligence of its master, and the obstacles of fortune.



‘ I am now freed from many embarrassments, and my mind approaches rather nearer that point to which it ought to arrive. I hope, however, to be always making some little progress, and to be learning something every day, till death closes my eyes : at least, as said a wise old man, I will strive so to do : and what gives me hopes I shall succeed, is, the passions that troubled my soul have almost ceased to torment me; and I flatter myself in a little time to be wholly exempted from their power. Adieu, my dear Barbatus. If we should not be able to meet in this world, we shall see one another again in the heavenly Jerusalem!’ Avignon, 1352.

The pope’s sickness detained Petrarch a long time at Avignon, and retarded the decision of the greatest affairs: it began about autumn. A malignant humour broke out in his face; it swelled prodigiously, and he was judged to be in great danger. In the month of December his condition terribly alarmed those who were interested in him. He was a little better in January, and they profited by this gleam of health to assemble the consistories for necessary business; in one of which the affair of Naples was decided: but this was only a false hope; and we see, by a letter of Petrarch to the bishop

of Cavaillon, that he relapsed soon after. This prelate went and passed five days at Vacluse, without acquainting Petrarch, who complains of it in a letter, as follows :

‘ And could you pass five days without me in my Transalpine Helicon? I was so near to you, that, had you wanted any thing easy to procure, I should have heard if you had called me. Why did you envy me this sweet consolation? I should complain bitterly, if you had not compensated your negligence to me by your indulgence to my works, with which I find you have passed the days and the nights. It is not conceivable that, in the midst of so many poets, historians, philosophers, and saints, you should give the preference to my trifles. I owe this to your tender blindness for me. My housekeeper tells me you had a mind to carry away some of my books, and did not dare to do it without my consent. Ought I not from this to fear some coolness on your part? Use your pleasure, my dear father! Do not you know that all I have is yours?

‘ I carried your letter to cardinal Taillerand, our master. He thanks you; and orders me to tell you, he has long determined never to importune the pope for any advantage to himself. He is inaccessible to all inordinate de-



fires: it is rather to the turn of his mind, than the greatness of his fortune, he owes this manner of thinking. You know the public news. The king of Sicily has at last obtained the crown he has sighed for so long. God grant that his peace with the king of Hungary may be lasting. Our pope came back from death's door, and is returned thither again. He would have been well long ago, if he had not about him a gang of physicians, whom I look on as the plagues of the rich. Cardinal d'Ostie is this moment expiring. He has lived long enough, according to nature; but his death is a loss to the republic.'

In the beginning of March the pope sent a young man on some business to Petrarch. After inquiring about the pope's disorder, he charged the young man expressly to desire the pontiff from him to take care of the physicians, and recollect the epitaph of that emperor:

'I was killed by the multitude of physicians.'

The young man, who was extremely ignorant, related what had been told him in a very dark and confused manner. The pope, who highly esteemed the sentiments of Petrarch, sent the young man back to him, with an order to write

down what was told him. ¶ In obedience to this order, Petrarch wrote the following letter :

‘ Holy father ! I shudder at the account of your fever ! Compare me not, however, to those flatterers whom the satirist describes, who are drowned in tears if they see a friend cry, or who sweat when he says I am hot. I rather resemble the man of whom Cicero speaks, who trembled for the welfare of Rome because his own was concerned. My health depends upon yours. I will trouble you with few words ; conscious who it is that addresses the divine ears of his holy father, and of the state he is in at present.

‘ I tremble to see your bed always surrounded with physicians, who are never agreed, because it would be a reproach for the second to think as the first, and only repeat what he had said before. “ It is not to be doubted,” as Pliny says, “ that, desiring to raise a name by their discoveries, they make experiments upon us, and thus barter away our lives.” We see in this profession what we see in no other. We confide at once in those who call themselves physicians, though there is nothing so dangerous as a mistake in this matter : but a flattering hope hides the danger ; and there is no



law for the punishment of extreme ignorance, no example of revenge. Physicians learn their trade at our expence: by the means of killing they become perfect in the art of curing; and they alone are permitted to murder with impunity.

‘Holy father! consider as your enemies the crowd of physicians that beset you. It is in our age we behold verified the prediction of old Cato, who announced that corruption would be general when the Greeks should have transmitted the sciences, and, above all, the art of physic. Whole nations have done without this art, and were, perhaps, much better, and lived longer than we do. The Roman republic, according to Pliny, was without physicians for six hundred years, and was never in a more flourishing state. But since it is now decided that we are neither to live nor die without them, at least make a choice from the multitude, and select not the man who can display the most eloquence or knowledge, but who has the most attachment towards you. Forgetting their profession, they issue from their retreats to make irruptions into the forests of poets, and the fields of orators. More occupied with shining than with curing, they brawl round a sick bed, making a jumble of

the thoughts of Cicero, and the aphorisms of Hippocrates. The sickness increases; no matter, if they succeed in fine sayings, and can gain a character for eloquence. To avoid the reproaches your physicians might cast on me, I have uttered nothing which is not drawn from Pliny, who has said more of this profession than of any other; and who also writes thus: "A physician that has the gift of a fluent speech becomes the arbiter of our life or death."

'The interest that I take, holy father, in your preservation, carries me further than I intended. I will add but one word more: look upon that physician as an assaffin who has more prate than experience, more noise than wisdom. Say to him with the old man in Plautus, "Go about your business: you was sent for to cure, and not to harangue." Add to this, a good diet, and, above all, a cheerful mind, which is never discouraged. By these means, restoring yourself to health, you will preserve the welfare of your servants, and of the church, which, while you are sick, must languish and decay.'

Petrarch passed the month of April at Vaucluse. Every thing, particularly the sixth of that month, recalled to him the remembrance of Laura.

'When I am seated on my green-enamelled



bank, when I hear the warbling of the birds, the rustling of the leaves, agitated by the zephyr, or the murmurs of my clear stream, I think I see, I hear her, whom earth conceals, and whom heaven will bring to light. From afar she answers to my sighs, and asks me, with kindness, why I shed so many tears! "Ought you to complain?" says she. "My death has rendered me immortal; and my eyes, that appeared closed are opened to everlasting light!"

'There is no place so favorable to the state of my heart, or where I enjoy greater liberty. In these delightful vallies there are a thousand hidden retreats formed for tender sighs: Love has not in Cytherus, Gnidus, or Paphos, such delightful asylums as these. All the objects around talk to me of love! All invite me to love for ever!

'How often, trembling and alone, do I seek Laura in these shades! Blest soul! who dost enlighten my dark and gloomy nights; what transports do I feel when you thus cheer me by your presence!

'Oh, Death! in one sad moment you burst asunder the bond that united the most virtuous soul with the most perfect form! In one sad moment you deprived me of my all! I am weary of every thing around me. But Laura

pities; she sometimes comes to my relief. Ah! could I paint her heavenly attractions, could I express the charms of her immortal mind, when she deigns to revisit earth, and consoles me with her divine converse, I should move to compassion the flinty heart!

‘Zephyrus returns; he brings with him the mild season, the flowers, herbs, and grass, his dear children. Progne warbles, Philomela sighs, the heavens become serene, and the vallies smile. Love re-animates the air, the earth, and the sea: all creatures feel his sovereign power. But, alas! this charming season can only renew my sighs! The melody of the birds, the splendor of the flowers, the charms of beauty, are in my eyes like the most gloomy deserts; for Laura is no more!’

While Petrarch was leading this solitary life at Vaucluse, the physicians at Avignon, extremely irritated with what he had said of them in the pope’s letter, inveighed furiously against him. One of them, born in the mountains, and now grown old and toothless, thinking it necessary to revenge the cause of the faculty, caballed against him, and wrote a letter full of the most atrocious invectives, in which he threatened he would write phillipics against Petrarch more pointed than those of Cicero



or Demosthenes. 'I did not discover at first,' says Petrarch, 'the author of this letter. Struck in the dark by Nisus, I feared lest returning it I might hit Eurialus. At last I found out it was the production of a mountaineer.'

At this time there was a report that the emperor was going to enter Italy. Petrarch, who was always solicitous for the glory of his country, and had long wished for this event, wrote the following answer to an abbe in Italy, who had informed him it was a false report :

'I am sorry to hear it. The journey would have been glorious to Cæsar, and useful to the world. But I believe he is contented to live, and has no ambition to reign. If he shuts himself up in Germany, and abandons Italy, he may be emperor of the Teutons, but he will never be emperor of Rome. It is not surprising that neither letters nor discourses have made any impression on him, when glory, the merit of a good action, and the finest occasion of undertaking it, can have no effect. I should be surprised and distressed at this news, if I had not learned, by experience, that we ought not to embarrass ourselves with the things of this world, and that all done therein resembles a spider's web. For what then should I grieve? I am only a pilgrim, a traveller on earth; for

few, or many years, as it shall be decreed. When I die, I shall go to my own country. Italy will be always where it is, between the Alps and the two seas. If an earthly emperor denies it succour, it will meet with aid from the Emperor of heaven !'

All the world, and particularly the people of Avignon, were desirous of seeing Petrarch's letters. Those who received them were so delighted with their spirit, they could not help shewing them to their friends. As there was keen satire in many of them, this raised him enemies : and they accused him of having attacked the authority of the pope, in his solicitude to have the holy see removed to Rome. One of his friends, who had been the innocent cause of these commotions, said to him, ' You are very hardy to attack the physicians : do not you then fear the maladies for which they must be consulted ? ' ' I am not immortal,' replied Petrarch : ' but should these disorders attack me, I expect nothing from their skill. I do not repent I have wounded them by the truth : If this makes enemies, I shall have enough, or I must keep silence for ever. With respect to the holy see, I know that Peter's chair was every where with him, and that it is at present wherever his successor is found ; though



there are places more holy and convenient than others: the master of the house chooses that which pleases him, and honors that which he prefers: the misrepresentations of my censurers never entered into my mind. I never presume to prescribe the seat where the master of all places should be fixed. I have not drawn my opinion from the slender fountain of the decretals, but from the source of St. Jerome; who says, if we seek for authority, the world is greater than a city. Whenever the bishop shall be at Rome, Constantinople, or Alexandria, it is always the same power, and the same priesthood. What I say, and what I have said, is this: in whatever place the chair of St. Peter is fixed, it is honorable to be seated in it.' These aspersions gave rise to some letters of justification, which are called the invectives of Petrarch; and to a work solicitously desired by the friends of Petrarch, and much more valuable than the former, which he styled his letter to posterity, from whence many things in these memoirs are taken, and which were neglected by the former biographers of Petrarch.

At this time cardinal Gui de Boulogne lost his mother, the wife of Robert, the seventh count of Auvergne and Boulogne. This pious princess, after having been at Rome to gain the

jubilee, retired into the convent of the Claristes, where she had a daughter who was a nun, and she died soon after. The cardinal, who was extremely fond of her, was sensibly touched with this loss, and received a consolatory letter from Petrarch, who in it mentions the great care of his mother from the beginning of life, and that she had even borne the burden of this beloved son a month longer than usual.

The bishop of Florence, who was then at Avignon, and just setting out for his diocese, told Petrarch he would not quit the country till he had seen the marvellous fountain of Vaucluse. 'I shall be glad also,' added he, 'to behold you in your hermitage, and to judge myself of the life you lead there. I am going to visit the monastery of St. Anthony: as I return you may depend on seeing me.' Petrarch, who knew this prelate was a man of his word, and expeditious in his operations, made haste to Vaucluse to prepare for a person of his rank, and collected every delicacy the country afforded. On the day this prelate was expected every thing was ready. It struck twelve, but no bishop appeared. Petrarch, who had been at the expence of a great feast, grew very impatient, and, in his agitation,



imagined these lines to the prior of the Holy Apostles :

‘ There is no more faith in the world. We can depend on no one ; the more I see, the more I feel this. Even your bishop, on whom I thought I might safely rely, he deceives me. He promised to dine with me to-day. I have done for him what I never did for any one : I have put my house into commotion to treat him well ; a conduct quite opposite to my character. He fears, no doubt, that he shall meet with the repast of a poet ; and deigns not to visit the place where the great king Robert, where cardinals and princes have been ; some to see the fountain ; others (shall I have the vanity to say it ?) to visit me. But if I am unworthy to receive such a guest, it seems to me he is still more so for breaking his word.’

While Petrarch was thus silently venting his perturbations, he heard a great noise : it was the bishop, who was just arrived. When they were at table, the discourse fell upon Nicholas Acciajoli, the senechal of Naples. The bishop told Petrarch he had quarrelled with his best friend, John Barrili, one of the greatest lords in the court of Naples. ‘ I am grieved at this quarrel,’ said the bishop. You are the friend

of both, and should make it up between them.' Petrarch undertook it; and, to bring it to bear, he wrote a letter to both united, which was to be only opened and read by them together: it contained the strongest motives for their reconciliation. At the same time he wrote one to each of them in private; which was kind, insinuating, and tending to the same end. He concluded by beseeching them to give one whole day to the reading of that letter addressed to both. The grand senechal had wrote to Petrarch that he would raise a Parnassus to him between Salernus and Mount Vesuvius. He replied, though he had already two, he would not refuse that he offered him. 'Consecrated under your auspices,' says he, 'this new Parnassus cannot but delight me.'

All these letters, dated the 24th of May, 1352, were given to the bishop, who took leave of Petrarch, and set out for Florence. Some months after he received answers from the grand senechal, which informed him his stratagem had succeeded beyond what he could have hoped, and that it had brought about a perfect reconciliation.

Petrarch obtained for his son John, this year, a canonship at Verona. He might have procured him elsewhere a more advantageous si-



tuation; but as this young man was at that critical age when the passions begin to unfold, he rather chose to put him under the care of his two friends, William de Pastrengo and Renaud de Villefranche, both established at Verona. He ordered him to set out immediately to take possession of this benefice, with the letters for his friends, to whom he recommended the young canon, and besought them earnestly to watch over his conduct. To Renaud he committed the improvement of his understanding; to William, the forming of his character, and the regulation of his manners. This is the picture Petrarch gives of his son in his letter to Renaud:

‘ You will know the young man I send you, unless a sudden alteration in him should prevent it. You are well convinced how dear he is to me. It was his destiny to quit an able master at a very tender age. As far as I can judge, he has a tolerable understanding: but I am not certain of this, for I do not sufficiently know him. When he is with me, he always keeps silence. Whether my presence confuses or is irksome to him, I know not; or whether the shame of his ignorance closes his lips. I doubt it is the latter; for I perceive but too clearly his antipathy for letters: I never saw it stronger in any one;

he dreads and detests nothing so much as a book: yet he has been brought up at Parma, at Verona, and Padua.

‘ I sometimes direct a few sharp pleasantries at this disposition. “ Take care,” I say, “ lest you should eclipse your neighbour Virgil !” When I talk in this manner, he looks down, and blushes. On this behaviour alone I build my hope. He has modesty, and a docility which renders him susceptible of every impression made on him.’

In the month of June, 1352, the people of Avignon beheld a very extraordinary spectacle: this was the entrance of that formidable tribune, Rienzi. We shall here relate the circumstances that befell him after his fall, and that brought him to the tribunal of the pope.

After he left the capitol, he hid himself in the castle of St. Ange. But, still in hopes of some change, he got an angel painted on the walls of a church, with the arms of Rome, holding in her hand a cross with a dove at the top, and trampling under her feet an asp, a basilisk, a lion, and a dragon; and he went in disguise to behold the effect this painting produced. When he saw the people cover it with mud, he found his power was at an end: he



set out the next day for Naples, where he arrived in January, 1348. The king of Hungary, then master of it, received Rienzi kindly, with whom he had some time had a secret correspondence. The news of this disturbed the pope, who by his legate desired the prince to send to him that perverse and excommunicated heretic. Whether the king of Hungary feared to displease the pope, or perceived that Rienzi was a madman not to be relied upon, he forsook him. He then went over to duke Warner, and desired him to re-establish him at Rome; but this did not succeed. Perceiving himself abandoned by all the world, and without resource, he wandered about Italy for some time, and then retired among the hermits of Mount Majella, where he passed the year 1349. In the year of the jubilee, 1350, he mixed in disguise with the strangers who went to Rome, and found that city more likely to favor his attempts from the disorders that again took place in it. There was a sedition supposed to be of his raising. A mob besieged the legate's palace, and two arrows were drawn upon him from an iron gate, one of which pierced through his hat, but did not wound him. The cardinal, who knew that Rienzi was at Rome,

wrote to the pope what he thought of this matter, and sent him the arrow with his letter.

The pope wrote to the legate to continue the proceedings against Rienzi; and, if he could lay hold of him, to send him to Avignon: in the mean time, to declare him incapable of any office, and to interdict him fire and water. Rienzi, on this, was determined to throw himself on the protection of the emperor Charles, though he had offended him when he was governor at Rome, by citing him to his tribunal; but he believed this prince was too generous to take revenge on an enemy who delivered himself up to his mercy.

He set out, therefore, from Rome, disguised as usual, with the caravans of pilgrims; and went to Prague, where the emperor, who was also king of Bohemia, held his court. He went first to the house of a Florentine apothecary, whom he desired to go with him to the emperor, to whom he addressed this singular speech: 'There is at Mount Majella a hermit called brother Ange, who has sent an ambassador to the pope, and who sends me to you to inform you, that till now God the Father and Son have reigned in the world; but that for



the future it will be the Holy Ghost.' At these words the emperor discovered it was Rienzi; and replied, 'I believe you are the tribune of Rome.' 'It is true,' said Rienzi, 'I am that tribune whom they have driven out of Rome.' The emperor sent for the ambassadors, bishops, and doctors, and made Rienzi repeat in their presence what he had said; to which he added, 'The person sent to the pope will use the same language; the pope will have him burned, and he will be raised again the third day by the power of the Holy Ghost. The people of Avignon will take up arms, and kill the pope and the cardinals; and they will elect an Italian pope, who will transport the holy see to Rome. That pope will crown you king of Sicily, and of Calabria, with a crown of gold; and he will crown me king of Rome, and all Italy, with a crown of silver.'

They made him write down what he had said. The emperor sent it to the pope, sealed with his own seal; and had the tribune carefully guarded till he should receive an answer from the pope. As Rienzi was accused of heresy, the emperor, in respect to the authority of the church, put him into the hands of the archbishop of Prague, who also wrote to the

pope to know his will concerning him. In the mean time he treated his prisoner with kindness, but took care to have him well guarded.

Clement returned the emperor thanks for the important service he had rendered the church in stopping this son of Belial; and desired he might be sent him under a good guard, or take his trial at Prague, if he chose it. But Rienzi, when he heard this, demanded to be sent in person to the pope; said he was ready to submit to his judgment, and to be punished if he was found guilty. He wrote for this purpose a long letter to cardinal Gui de Boulogne, "whose immense bounty," says he, "I have proved;" and to desire that, after his examination, he might be permitted to take the habit of St. John of Jerusalem, having wished ever since his fall to consecrate himself to that holy order. "My marriage ought not to be an obstacle," added he, "because my little wife will become religious as well as myself." It appears, by this letter of Rienzi, that his wife, his children, his nephews, and his sister, were hid at Prague, and lived upon charity. From the prisons of Prague he was brought to those of Limoges, and did not get to Avignon till this year. In all the places through which he passed the people came out to meet him, and offered him deli-



verance; to which he always answered, that he went freely and of his own accord to Avignon. His march had more the air of a conqueror than a criminal. Petrarch speaks of it thus: 'This tribune, formerly so powerful, so dreaded, now the most unhappy of men, has been brought here as a prisoner. I praised and I advised him. I loved his virtue, and I admired his courage. I thought Rome was going to resume under him the empire she formerly held; and that, in exciting the emulation of Rienzi, I should participate his glory. Ah! if he had continued as he began, he would have been praised and admired by all the world. This man, who made the wicked tremble, and who gave the brightest hopes to the good, is come before this court humbled and despised.' He who was never seen without a train of the greatest lords in Italy, and a multitude of people, marches now between two serjeants! The populace run out to meet him, eager to see the man of whom they have heard so much.

'The moment he arrived, the sovereign pontiff committed his cause to three princes of the church, to determine his punishment.

'On entering the city, he asked if I was there? I knew not whether he hoped in me for succour, or what I could do to serve him.

‘In the process against him, they accuse him of nothing criminal: they do not even impute to him the having joined with bad men, the abandoning the public cause, or the having fled from the capitol, when he might have lived and died there with honour. It is his undertaking, not the end, they reproach him with. In my mind, what they accuse him of is to his glory; that the republic should be free, and that at Rome only they should treat of the affairs of the republic. And is this a crime worthy of the wheel and of the gibbet? A Roman citizen afflicted to see his country, which is by right the mistress of the world, become the slave of the vilest men! This is the foundation of his charge! It now remains to be determined what is the punishment due to such a crime. His beginning was glorious; but all on a sudden he changed his conduct. I wrote him a severe letter on the occasion. He abandoned the good, and delivered himself over to the wicked; but of this he is not accused. Whatever be his end, his beginning is ever to be admired.’

Clement was glad to have Rienzi in his power: he was brought before him, and did not appear the least disconcerted. He maintained that they accused him unjustly of heresy,



and demanded that his cause should be re-examined with more equity. The pope made him no answer, and ordered them to put him in the prison prepared for him. It was a high tower in which he was shut up, fastened by the foot with a chain which hung from the top. Excepting this, he was treated with mildness, and supplied from the pope's kitchen; and they gave him books; among others, Livy and the bible, for of these he was particularly fond. We are not told who were the three princes of the church to whom his cause was committed, but it is supposed they were the cardinals of Boulogne, of Taillerand, and of Deux.

The crimes imputed to him were, drawing away the city of Rome from the dominion of the pope; declaring it free; and pretending that the rights of the Roman empire resided still in the people of Rome. Some said he merited death, and others, that he should be declared infamous, and incapable of transmitting any estate to posterity. Rienzi demanded a judgment according to law, and to be allowed an advocate to defend his cause: but this was denied him. This enraged Petrarch, who wrote a long, but secret, letter to the people of Rome, to do something in his favor; but it produced no effect. The contents of it were, that Rome

ought to be the monarch of the world, and the arbiter of all human decisions. Rienzi, as it happened, had no occasion for it. His affairs changed on a sudden; and he owed his preservation to a most extraordinary circumstance, which shews the spirit that prevailed in the court of the pope. It is Petrarch who informs us of it, in a letter to the prior of the Holy Apostles.

‘I have learned,’ says he, ‘by the letters of my friends, it being rumoured at Avignon that Rienzi was a great poet, they thought it a kind of sacrilege to put a man to death of so sacred a profession; as Cicero speaks in his oration for the poet Licinius Archias, who had been his master. I own I am overwhelmed with joy to see that men, who are not acquainted with the Muses themselves, should grant them this singular privilege; and, under the shadow of their name, should save a man from death, odious to his judges, and whom they had agreed to find guilty of a capital crime. What could they have obtained more under the reign of Augustus, in the time when the greatest honours were paid them, and they came from all parts to behold this unparalleled prince, the master of kings, and the friend of poets! I felicitate the Muses and Rienzi! Heaven for-



bid I should envy him a name which is of such service to him. But if you ask me what I think? I answer, that Rienzi is a very eloquent man; skilful, insinuating, and a good orator; with few thoughts, but an agreeable vivacity in his compositions. I believe he may have read all the poets; but I think he no more merits the name of a poet, than he would that of an embroiderer for wearing an embroidered habit. Horace says, that to be a poet it is not sufficient to make verses; and I even doubt whether Rienzi ever made a single verse! I thought you would be pleased to hear of an event in which the life of a man was in danger because he wished to save the republic, and to learn that the same man escapes the peril under the name of a poet, though he never made a single verse.

‘Virgil himself would not have obtained such a redemption! For it is certain, that before such judges, Virgil would have passed for a forcerer rather than a poet.’

In another letter, wrote to an abbe not named, he shows what a rage for poetry prevailed at this time in the city of Avignon.

‘Never were the words of Horace more exactly verified: “Wise or ignorant, we all write verses!” It is a mournful consolation to have

so many sick companions; I had rather be diseased alone: I am tormented by my own disorders, and those of others; they do not let me breathe. Verses and epistles rain in upon me every day from all parts of the world, from France, Germany, Greece, and England. I do not know myself; they take me for the judge of all human understanding. If I answer all the letters I receive, no mortal will be so full of business: if I do not, they will say I am disdainful and insolent. If I censure, I shall be an odious critic; if I praise, a nauseous flatterer. But this would be nothing, if the contagion had not reached the Roman court. What do you think of our lawyers and our physicians? They no longer consult Justinian or Esculapius: deaf to the cries of the sick, and of their clients, they will listen to none but Virgil and Homer. What do I say? Even labourers, carpenters, and masons, abandon their hammers and shovels to lay hold of Apollo and the Muses. Do you ask why formerly poets were so rare, and this plague so common at present? It was because poetry demands an elevated mind, superior to every thing, and free from the cares of this world: it must have a soul made on purpose, which it is rare to meet with, from whence it happens that there



are such a number of versifiers in the streets, and so few poets on Parnassus: they go to the foot of the mountain, but scarcely one ascends it. Judge what pleasure those must have who attain its summit, since those who only view it at a distance, abandon for it their affairs and their wealth, however avaricious they are! I felicitate my country for having produced some spirits worthy to mount upon Pegasus, and rise along with him: if love to it does not blind me, I see such at Florence, at Padua, at Verona, at Sulmone, and at Naples: every where else we behold nothing but rhimers, who creep along upon the ground.

‘I reproach myself for having by my example contributed to this madness. My laurels were too green, and I am now tormented for my desire of obtaining them. In my house, and out of doors, wherever I set my feet, versifying frantics surround me, overwhelm me with questions, brawl and dispute, and talk of things which would have been quite beyond the aim of Homer or of Virgil. I am afraid lest the magistrates should accuse me of having corrupted the republic. The other day a father came up to me in tears, and said, “See how you treat me, who have always loved you. You have been the death of my only

son." I was so struck with these words, and the air of the man who spoke them, that I remained some time motionless. At last, recovering myself, I replied, that I neither knew him nor his son. "It is of little consequence whether you know him or not," replied the old man: "he knows you too well. I have ruined myself to bring him up to the law, and now he tells me he will follow no steps but yours. I am thus disappointed of all my hopes; for I much fear he will never be either a lawyer or a poet." I smiled at this, and those who were with me; but the old man went away in grief and rage. Happily this contagion has not yet reached Vacluse, the air of which is, perhaps, not very susceptible of foreign impressions; there is only my fisherman, who, though old, advises himself, as Persius says, to dream on Parnassus. If this delirium should spread, shepherds, fishermen, labourers, and the beasts themselves, will ruminate and bellow out verses.

In the beginning of August, 1352, the cardinals of Boulogne and Taillerand sent by the pope's order for Petrarch. He obeyed the summons, and found it was an order to receive the place of secretary to the pope. He represented



to his patrons and friends, that he could never give up liberty and leisure for any worldly gain. 'This wealth,' says he, 'would be a real misery: a yoke of gold or silver would not be lighter to me than one of wood or of lead. I despised riches when I stood in need of them, and it would be a shame to run after them now I can do without them. We should proportion the provisions for our journey to the length of our route. I am approaching the end of my race, and ought to be more occupied with the place of rest, than the accommodations on the way.' To this he adds, that it would have been more honest, and more excusable, to desire these advantages when he had a brother and friends who were indigent; that he was no longer in this situation, his brother being a Carthusian, and all his friends dead or well-placed: that he wanted nothing at present; but, should he once open the door to worldly desires, he should want every thing. He therefore with tears conjured these friends, who had laid a thousand snares to gain this point, to let him live in his own way, to preserve his honour, and not to impose a burden, the weight of which would overwhelm him. All his representations and prayers were to no purpose;

they dragged him to his footstool who, as one says, opens the heavens with his finger, and governs the stars by the motion of his cap.

The pope, who loved Petrarch, and always received him with pleasure, said many obliging things to him. He had always wished to attach a man of his merit to his court; and he thought it was incumbent on him to sacrifice his liberty for an office at once honorable and advantageous. 'Single I stood,' says he, 'mournful and dismayed: my head was presented to the sacrifice, when fortune befriended, and opened to me the door of liberty.'

All the world agreed that Petrarch was well fitted to discharge the employment to which they destined him, for his wisdom and fidelity. They only reproached him with one fault, that his style was too elevated for the church of Rome. He thought at first they meant this in irony: but his friends, and particularly the cardinals Boulogne and Taillerand, assured him that he must lower his tone, and not take such high flights. When he heard this, his joy was that of a prisoner, who views his prison door set open to him. He was desired to write something in a more easy style. Instead of doing this, he stretched the wings of imagination to their utmost extent, that he might soar



above every idea of those who wished to enslave him.

They gave him the subject. 'Though it was not a work of imagination and poetry,' says he, 'Apollo and the Muses did me good service. Most of those who read my composition said, they could not comprehend a word of it. Others said, they supposed I wrote in Greek, or some other barbarous language. They would send me to school at my age to learn a low and creeping style. With Cicero, I know but three styles; the sublime, which he calls grave; the moderate, which he calls middling; and the simple, which he calls attenuated. In this age, scarce any one has attained the first, and few arrive at the second; the third is the style of the many. They tell me to lower my style: That is impossible, I answer, because I am at the lowest already: lower than that is no style at all, but a base and abject manner of speaking. Thus I am out of the difficulty, and my liberty is preserved. I feel the pleasure more sensibly, for having been on the brink of slavery. I am delighted that people who believe themselves elevated, have discovered that I flew beyond their sphere. I will never more expose myself to the same peril; nothing shall ever tempt me; I will be deaf

to the prayers of my friends, and consult myself alone in matters so essential to my peace.'

Petrarch having thus escaped the greatest danger he had ever run, after having thanked God for his deliverance, set out for Vacluse, where he passed the remainder of August in a delightful tranquillity, waiting with impatience for the autumn to return to Italy. Writing to a friend, he gives this pleasing account of his calm employments at Vacluse :

' Nothing pleases me so much as my perfect freedom. I rise at midnight ; I go out at break of day. I study in the fields as in my closet : I think, read, and even write there. I combat idleness : I chase away sleep, indulgence, and pleasures. In the day I run over the craggy mountains, the humid vallies, and shelter myself in the profound caverns. Sometimes I walk, attended only by my reflections, along the banks of the Sorgia. Meeting with no person to distract my mind, I become every day more calm ; and send my cares sometimes before ; sometimes I leave them behind me. I recall the past, and deliberate on the future. Fond of the place I am in, every situation becomes in turn agreeable to me, except Avignon. I find here Athens, Rome, and Florence, as my



imagination desires: here I enjoy all my friends; not only those with whom I have lived, but those who have long been dead, and whom I know only by their works.'

The cardinal de Boulogne set out for Paris in the beginning of September, to negotiate a peace between the kings of France and England. Petrarch went to take leave of him, and request his orders for Italy. The cardinal told him he should be only one month away, and he hoped he should find him at his return. He took with him his faithful Achates, Peter, abbe of St. Benigne. The cardinal wanted to procure Petrarch some good establishment in France; and wrote upon the road to desire him to wait at least till he should have written to him from Paris, upon a great affair which concerned him. 'I ask you,' says he, 'only to wait one month.' In obedience to these orders, Petrarch passed September and October at Avignon.

At this time nothing was spoken of but the cruel war between the Genoese and the Venetians: their losses were on each side extreme.

Petrarch wrote a letter to the Genoese, who were the victors, to induce them to peace;

and collects together the motives for their union with the Venetians in a very artful manner :

‘I applied at first,’ says he, ‘to the Venetians, my neighbours: I thought it my duty. As a man, I cannot but be touched with the miseries of humanity: as an Italian, I ought to be sensible to the calamities of my country; and I believe no one feels them more. I address you with the more confidence, knowing with whom I have to do. No nation is more terrible in war, or more amiable in peace. You have conquered; it is now time to repose. In the heat of combat, it is valor that spills the blood of men; but after it is over, humanity should close their wounds. There are none but savage beasts with whom carnage succeeds victory! Who can read, without shuddering, of a battle which lasted two days and one winter night? Who can represent the horrors of it? The dreadful blustering of the wind, the rattling of the sails, the clash of arms! The dashing of the vessels against one another, the hissing of the arrows flying through the darkness, and the cries and groans of the wounded! To you may be applied what Virgil said of that famous night in which Troy was reduced to cinders: “Who can paint



the shocking carnage which she covered with her mantle, or shed tears enough to bewail the blood spilt in it?"

' Reflect at present that your enemies, as well as yourselves, are Italians; that you were once friends, and that your quarrel is only about rank and superiority. Would to God that, renouncing a war which has so slight a foundation, you would unite your arms to punish the perfidious instigators of it, and then turn them to the deliverance of the Holy Land from the Turks. This would indeed be useful to the world, and to posterity! Great cities in peace are like those strong bodies who appear healthy without, but have many internal maladies, occasioned by a too long repose. Motion and agitation are necessary to cities as well as to men, to dissipate the bad humors these inward diseases produce, and which are much more dangerous than those which appear without. This merits your attention. It is best to live in peace when we can; but when that is impossible, a foreign war is preferable to a war at home.

' I cannot read the stars; but I venture to predict, that in foreign wars you will always have the advantage, and that you have only to fear interior enemies. How many examples

are there of cities whom nothing could have destroyed but wars with one another! You are becoming a proof of this yourselves. Recollect the time when you were the most flourishing of all people: I was then a child, and remember it only as a dream. Your country appeared a celestial paradise: such surely were the Elysian fields! What a beautiful object towards the sea! Those towers which rose to heaven! Those palaces where art excelled nature! Those hills covered with cedars, vines, and olives! Those houses of marble built under the rocks! Those delicious retreats on the shore, whose sand shines like gold, on which the foaming waves, dashing their crystal heads, attract the eyes of the pilot, and stop the motion of the rowers! Can we behold without admiration the more than mortal figures that inhabited your city, and all the delights of life with which your woods and fields abounded! Those who entered it thought they were got into the temple of felicity and joy. It might be said at this time of Genoa, as anciently of Rome, it was the city of kings!

‘ You were then masters of the sea, and without your leave no one dared to sail on it. From this happy period descend to the time



when pride, luxury, and envy, the common effects of prosperity, subdued your nation, and reduced it to that misery your enemies attempted in vain. Great gods! What a difference! That beautiful shore, that magnificent city, appeared uncultivated, deserted, and ruined! Those superb palaces, become the trading-places of thieves, struck the passenger with horror instead of admiration! In fine, your city, besieged by its exiles, the Dorias and Spinolas on the side of the Gibbelines, assisted by the Milanese, suffered all the plagues of war; when king Robert, the glory of our age, who came to its succour, remained blocked up in it a whole year. They fought (a thing incredible, and unheard of before) not only on land and sea, but in the air and under the earth.

‘After this you were agitated several years by intestine commotions, having no enemies but those within your walls; till at last, instructed by past misfortunes, you elected a chief, which is undoubtedly the best situation for a republic. This changed the face of your city; your clouds were dissipated; your quarrels extinguished; and peace, harmony, and justice, were re-established.

‘You may now with ease take warning for the future. There is an old proverb which

says, "How many things are ill done, because they are done but once!" You may recover what you have lost. You have learned from experience, that human prosperities are slippery and uncertain, and that you owe your misfortunes to interior discord. You begin as it were to live again: take care of those rocks on which you have formerly split. Be united among yourselves; love justice and peace: and if you cannot live without war, carry it into foreign countries, where you will always find enemies to contend with.—Avignon, November 1352.'

A few days after writing this letter, Petrarch, tired with waiting for the cardinal de Boulogne, went secretly from Avignon, giving it out he was gone for Italy; and he hid himself at Vaucluse. On his arrival there, he wrote thus to the cardinal:

'You ordered me to wait for you. You was to be absent but a month; but the Grand Monarch, who is attached to you by the bonds of love as well as of blood, the charms of Paris and of the Seine, have made you forget your promise. I am not astonished at it. For my part, the dreary city of Avignon, and the boisterous Rhone, have detained me till now their prisoner; but, no longer able to support that



situation, I am come to take refuge in my retreat, and wait your commands. If you continue at Paris, I shall soon set out for Italy, without bidding adieu to my friends, who will detain me a prisoner in that vile city, from whence my spirit takes its flight, and leaves my body to its fate. The two months I have passed there, have appeared to me to be years. The service you would do me is, I doubt not, considerable: your bounties are always so. I trust my absence will not hurt the interest you take in my friends. If you will bestow upon them what you have destined to me, you will confer on me a great obligation. I have enough, and too much, for the few years that remain of life: I wish for nothing more. You are the kindest, the best of patrons. I flatter myself you will pardon me if I yield to necessity, to which the greatest kings have submitted. I have obeyed you as long as I could.—Vaucluse, November.'

After having been some days at Vaucluse, with no news of the cardinal, and despairing of his return, Petrarch determined to set out for Italy. The autumn of this year was uncommonly dry; it had not rained for several months. the weather was bright and serene; he thought he might depend on its continu-

ance ; ' though there is nothing,' says he, ' we can less reckon upon in winter.' He had in all his former journies always endured excessive heats or violent rains.

He set out the 16th of November with his books and papers, which he meant to transport to his Parnassus in Italy. He was got a very little way, when the weather clouded, and a heavy rain came on. He was at first tempted to go back ; but he took courage, a port being not far off, and continued his route. He must pass through Cavaillon ; and he wished to stop there, to take leave of Philip de Cabassole. It was almost night when he arrived. The bishop was sick, and had concealed his disorder from Petrarch, that he might not afflict him. He received him as his good angel ; tears of joy ran down his face. ' I am no longer in pain for myself,' said he to his brother ; ' with my friend Petrarch, health has re-entered my habitation.' He was ignorant that Petrarch was going to Italy, and that he meant to reach Durance that night. When he was informed of this, he appeared in such extreme grief, and was so urgent with Petrarch to stay at least that night, that he could not deny him. It poured all night, which distressed Petrarch, who had designed to set out early in the morning ; and he



feared for his books and papers. At last he determined on leaving them behind, and exposing himself alone to the injuries of the weather, to which he was hardened by custom, when an unforeseen obstacle stopped his progress. Some of the bishop's servants told him that the banditti of the Alps were come down to the Var on the side of Nice, and laid every thing waste, which rendered it impossible to go that road to Italy; and this was Petrarch's route, that, before he quitted France, he might pass through Montrieux, to see his brother Gerard. The bishop expressed great joy at this news; he was persuaded it would induce Petrarch to renounce his project. Petrarch continued for some time irresolute: but the repeated requests of the bishop, and the violent rains which continued, and rendered the roads impassable, at last determined him to stay. He retired to his chamber to sleep for an hour; but the rain had made way through the roof, and came down upon him. He rose, therefore, and said matins; and then went into the bishop's chamber, whom he found awakened.

He spent two days at Cavaillon; and then sent a part of his servants to Italy, that he might be the more retired, and set out himself for Vaucluse. The dread of spoiling his books and

papers influenced him to this determination. 'We see,' says he, 'what a constraint riches are on peace and liberty.' The fine weather returned just as his people were got too far to be recalled. 'It seems,' says he, 'as if Providence would put a rein on my desire to pass into Italy. He knows better than we do what is for our good, which is not always what is most agreeable to ourselves.'

Petrarch passed the rest of November at Vacluse, and all the month of December, in which there happened an event that interested all Europe.

Clement VI. was forced at last to yield to the disease which had so long oppressed him. 'He forgot,' said Petrarch, 'or despised, the advice I had given him. The physicians delivered him from the embarrassments of the papacy by improper remedies, and too frequent bleedings. He died the 6th of December, 1352.' Villani says he died of a lingering fever; others, of an abscess; and some said that he was poisoned. His body was carried the next day to the church of Notre Dame, where they bestowed on it a very pompous funeral. Various have been the opinions concerning this prince. Villani speaks only of his faults; and the ecclesiastical historians reproach him for not trans-



lating the holy see to Rome ; but others own he was one of the greatest men that ever sat in St. Peter's chair ; and though he had faults, he had likewise very great and amiable virtues ; that he was too fond of women, but he governed his estates in a manner that was a model for all princes. One instance of his influence over a foreign prince does him honor : He ordered Casimir, king of Poland, to send back his mistresses, and to be faithful to his wife. This prince refused at first, but submitted at last, and underwent the penance imposed on him.

Clement had the pleasure of bestowing kingdoms, and gave away more benefices than any one of his predecessors. Nothing was so painful to him as to refuse a request ; and when it was not in his power to grant it, he always found some expedient to send the persons away not only contented, but obliged, by his behaviour. He distributed the treasures of the church with a liberal profusion, and expended considerable sums in useful buildings, in marrying orphans, and in relieving noble families who had fallen to decay. Petrarch assures us, no one better merited the name he bore ; and his clemency was so great, that a person who had offended him grievously, having pre-

sumed afterwards to ask a favor of him, instead of revenge for his former behaviour, he instantly granted his petition.

Clement was naturally eloquent, and spoke without preparation in a very elegant manner: his consistorial discourses, which are in the library at Paris, prove this. He had a singular talent in conveying his sentiments: they appeared the sentiments of those he conversed with, whose hearts he could move at pleasure. He delighted in peace and harmony, and as much as possible stifled every seed of war. He attempted to establish peace between France and England: he accomplished it between Hungary and Naples; and was preparing to unite the Greek and Latin churches.

But Petrarch was never fond of this pope, who was not an Italian, and who had completed the palace of Avignon, instead of removing the holy see to Rome. A few days after his death he wrote to the bishop of Cavaillon as follows:

‘ I send you three natural curiosities of a very different kind: a golden fish with silver scales, called turtura: my fisherman’s son took it in the beautiful water of my fountain. The second is a flat drake, who has been long an inhabitant of its banks: neither the air nor water



could save it from the pursuit of my dog. The third is an epistle which I have fished myself, with the nets of my mind, in the waves where my soul swims in the midst of dangerous rocks. You will have the goodness to keep the two first, and return the last when you have enough of it. You know my reason; truth begets hatred. If this was true in the time of Terence, how much more is it so at present! Read it then in private, and send it back till we shall see what God or fortune shall do for us. I would show it to no other person; you will judge by that of my confidence.'

The bishop of Cavaillon returned it, and assured Petrarch it gave him much pleasure. 'I am delighted,' replied he, 'my letter has pleased you. I find I like it better now it has obtained your suffrage. It is addressed to you, because you are the declared enemy of every vice. I send you a second letter to the clergy of Padua, on the death of Ildebrand, our bishop. His virtues were above our highest praise. Compare this letter with that I sent yesterday, and see if my style is as proper for praise as censure. The faults that you will find ascribe to myself, and my excellencies to the nature of the subjects; for, in truth, it is as easy to praise the one as to blame the other. Who would

not be eloquent in the treating of such subjects ?'

The first of these letters was a satire on Clement. Petrarch had before censured him, under the name of Pamphylius, for the little care he took of the flock confided to his trust by Jesus Christ, and for the soft and vain-glorious life that he led, so opposite to the conduct of the primitive Christians ; and he threatens him that his Master will soon come and call him to an account.

Clement, under the name of Mitian, replied thus to Pamphylius :

' No one can be more churlish and severe than you are : but know, it is easier to censure the manners of others, than to justify one's own. Ungrateful traitor ! Have not you denied your Master, and abandoned your flock, to avoid persecution ? Did the flock, given to your care by Jesus Christ, ever suffer more than under you ! Not a valley in Rome but you have filled with blood. I should be ashamed to lead the sorry life in which you glory. " I have chests full of money ;" true ; and can I do better than make use of it for the sweets and conveniences of life ? I would choose my spouse, the church, should be adorned ; that at her toilet should be seen that fine looking-glass



presented me by the shepherd of Bifance; and that every one should know her to be a queen. I will not lead my flock, as you do, among thickets and rocks, but into fat pastures. I would have them want for nothing, and enjoy every thing. Heaven forbid that I should be so cruel to separate the he and she goats, the bulls and the heifers! They were intended for companions to each other. Your threatenings give me no concern. The Master I serve is good as well as powerful.'

On the death of Clement, the cardinals felt the necessity of making some reformation in the Roman court: and to do this, they cast their eyes on John Birel, the general of the Carthusians, for his successor. He was a Limosin, famed for the sanctity of his life, and his zeal for the glory of God. No human influence affected him: he preached repentance with power, and he wrote to princes with the utmost freedom to exhort them to reform their lives. The cardinal de Taillerand was alarmed when he saw them inclined to such a choice. 'What are you going to do?' said he. 'Do not you perceive that this monk, accustomed to govern anchorites, will oblige us all to live like them? He will make us go on foot, as did the apostles; and our fine horses he will send to the plough.'

The cardinals were embarrassed ; and the election would have been spun out to a great length, had not king John, of France, arrived at Avignon to procure the election of a prelate devoted to him. This hastened their choice. The cardinal de Taillerand, who had the greatest interest in the conclave, caused it to fall upon Alberti cardinal d'Ostie, who took the name of Innocent VI. He was born in a village of Limoges, of parents little known. This pontiff owed his elevation to the reputation he had for integrity and a good life, and his capacity for reforming the Roman court by his example, still more than by his laws. In effect, soon after his election, he suppressed the reserves of benefices, fixed bounds to pluralities, obliged the incumbents to residence, and diminished his table and his train : an example the cardinals made no haste to follow.

Petrarch was not much pleased at this election. An old, ignorant cardinal, but a great civilian, maintained that Petrarch was a magician, because he read Virgil : and he had persuaded cardinal Alberti to think so too, though he had been professor of the canon law with success in the university of Thoulouse. 'He was a man of good life and little knowledge,' says Villani.



Petrarch, in his eclogue on Clement VI. puts these words into his mouth: 'There shall come after me a dull and gloomy man, who, by his four refusals, shall repair the wrongs I did the church by my over-abundant facility. He shall fatten the Roman pastures with the smoke of Auvergne.' After the coronation of Innocent, the cardinals de Taillerand and Boulogne wrote to Petrarch, that he must come immediately to kiss his feet, and compliment him upon his exaltation. Petrarch had often seen him at the cardinal de Taillerand's, who amused himself with joking Petrarch before him on his powers of magic. Whatever repugnance he had, Petrarch thought it necessary to obey these orders: but his chief concern was the leaving his faithful fisherman, who was fallen sick. Soon after he got to Avignon, one of his servants, whom he had left at Vaucluse to take care of his beloved friend, came post to inform him he was dead. He wrote instantly to the two cardinals as follows:

'If Regulus, the terror of the Carthaginians, being in Africa, and charged with an important negociation, blushed not to ask his dismissal of the senate, because the man was dead who cultivated his field, why should I blush to make such a request to my two illustrious pa-

trons, who am charged with no public, and who have few private affairs? Yesterday I lost the guardian of my retreat. He was not unknown to you; he cultivated for me a few acres of very bad land. I fear not from you the answer made to Regulus by the senate, "Continue to work for the Republic, she shall take care of your field." The field of Regulus was at Rome; mine is at Vacluse; a place you are scarcely acquainted with. Scipio, the other scourge of Africa, and commanding with success in Spain, asked his dismissal also, because his daughter had no portion. I am in the same case at present; my library, which I consider as my daughter, has lost its friend. That rustic man, whom I can never lament as he deserves, had more prudence, and even urbanity, than is often to be found in cities; and, besides this, he was the most faithful animal that the earth ever produced. To him I confided my books, and all that was most dear to me. I was absent three years from Vacluse: at my return nothing was wanting, nor a single thing displaced. He could not read, but he loved letters. He preserved with extreme care my choicest books, which he knew from being long accustomed to them, and how to distinguish my works from those of the ancients.



When I gave a book to his care, he expressed great joy, and pressed it to his breast with a sigh: sometimes he named the author in a whisper. To behold him at this moment, one would have thought that the sight or the touch of a book rendered him wiser and happier. I have spent fifteen years with him, and confided to him my most secret thoughts, as I would have done to a priest of Ceres; and his breast was to me the temple of faith and love. I left him two days ago slightly indisposed, to obey your orders: his old age was sound and vigorous, and he is dead. Yesterday he died, asking for me continually, and calling upon the name of the Lord. His death affects me extremely; but I should have regretted him still more, if his age had not foretold that I must soon have lost him. Illustrious prelates! let the man depart who is useless to you, but of very great importance to his field and to his library.'

Petrarch obtained the favor he desired without much difficulty; and it was not possible to draw him again to Avignon, notwithstanding the solicitations of the cardinals, of his friends, and particularly his dear Socrates, to accept an establishment in the court of the pope; to the latter of whom he wrote thus:

‘I am content ; I have enough for life : I have put a rein on my desires, and I will have no more. Cincinnatus, Curius, Fabricius, and Regulus, after having subdued whole nations, and led kings in triumph, were not so rich as I am. If I open the door to the passions, I shall always be poor. Avarice, luxury, and ambition, know no bounds : but avarice, above all, is an unfathomable abyss. I have clothes to defend me from the cold, food to nourish me, horses to carry me, a clod of earth to sleep on, to walk on, and to cover me when I die. What more has the emperor of Rome ? My body is healthy : subdued by labour, it is the less rebellious to my soul. I have book of all kinds : they are my wealth ; they feast my soul with a voluptuousness which is never followed with disgust. I have friends whom I consider as my greatest treasures, when they do not aim to deprive me of my liberty. Add to this, the greatest security ; for I have no enemies, but those created by envy ; and I am not, perhaps, sorry for those, though I despise them. I reckon still in the number of my possessions, the approbation and kindness of all good men, even of those whom I have never seen. These are riches which you may deem poverty ; I believe you do : but by what means would you have



me gain others? By lending out to usury; by trading on the seas; by brawling at the bar; by the sale of my tongue and of my pen; thus fatiguing myself incessantly to amass those treasures I should preserve with inquietude, abandon with regret, and which another would dissipate in extravagance? In one word, what do you require of me? I am rich enough for my own satisfaction; must I also appear rich for the satisfaction of others? In fact, is it not my own affair? Does any one consult the taste of another in the food he is to eat? Keep then for yourself your manner of thinking, and leave me to mine: it can never be shaken, for it is established on solid foundations.'

Gui Settimo distressed Petrarch more than any of his friends concerning this matter: his temper was naturally ambitious, and he had constantly adhered to the court of the pope. 'He loves persons of merit,' says he. 'I wish it may be so,' replied Petrarch; but this is nothing to me: if the pope loves only such, he loves a very few; and I cannot flatter myself with being one of them, though I would prefer this honor to that of being pope.'

Petrarch passed all the winter at Vaucluse, where he was, like a bird upon the branch, ready

every moment to take wing for his dear country. He waited the return of some servants whom he had sent to Italy to learn what passed there: he was informed that his friends were all assembled, and waited his coming. Italy appeared to him preferable to all other places; but this account made him tremble for his liberty; and he determined to send another servant, to see if he could not discover some secret retreat where he might enjoy tranquillity. In the mean time he prepared for a journey to Montrioux, to see his brother Gerard, that he might not quit the country without bidding him farewell; and, before he set out, he wrote the following letter to one of his friends:

‘On whatever side I turn my eyes, I find nothing but difficulties. It is time for me to go to the other world, for I cannot obtain ease in this. Is this my fault, or that of the world around me? Perhaps of all together. One part of the earth is desolated by war; in another they possess peace, but are more cruel and miserable than in war. Here is famine, there is gluttony: here the air, there the manners, are infected. Here they groan under slavery, there they suffer from the licentiousness of liberty. This land is dry and barren, the other is exposed to the inundation of furious rivers.



There they freeze, here they burn. Here is a dreadful solitude, there an importunate multitude. These men are a prey to savage beasts, those to the deceits of one another. It must be allowed, that a situation of ease and tranquillity is not to be met with upon earth.'

Petrarch set out for Montrieux the seventh of April, 1353. When he was between Aix and St. Maximin, he met with a company of Roman ladies, who were going on a pilgrimage. By their air and gait he distinguished at a distance their country and their birth. Drawing near to them, and finding, by their language, he was not deceived, he stopped, and politely asked them from whence they came, and whither they were going. The sound of an Italian voice spread joy through this little company. The oldest of them answered, 'Rome is our country; and we are going on a pilgrimage to St. James. And you, Sir, are you a Roman? are you going to Rome?' 'I am not going there immediately,' replied Petrarch; 'but my heart is always there.' This answer inspired the pilgrims with confidence. They surrounded Petrarch, and replied to a thousand questions he asked them concerning the state of the republic. They told him that John Ceroni had resigned his post, his nature being too

quiet for the Romans, who were disgusted with a uniform government: he retired therefore to the castle of Abruzzo. The nobles on this established the ancient form of government, and named two senators, taken out of the houses of the Urfini and the Colonna, and these were in place when Clement died. Soon after they accused them of buying up the corn in a time of dearth, to enrich themselves. This enraged the people, and they besieged the capitol. One of the senators saved himself by escaping at a back door; the other was stoned to death. This happened in February, 1353. After this account, Petrarch inquired after his friends, particularly concerning Lelius. 'How does he do? In what does he employ himself?' 'We left him in good health,' they replied. 'He is very happily married, and his wife has brought him some fine children.' Petrarch then asked these ladies if he could be so happy as to serve them in any respect. 'Every thing,' says he, in a letter to Lelius, 'urged me to make them this offer; God, virtue, their country, and their love of you. I wished to divide with them the sum I had brought with me for my journey. Their answer was, "Pray to God that our journey may be successful; we ask only



this of you." This reply delighted, but it did not surprise me. I perceived it in the dignity and disinterestedness of Roman ladies, differing in this respect from women of all other nations, who, so far from refusing what is offered them, request with importunity what they have been refused.' Petrarch, charmed with the discourse of these pilgrims, would have passed the day with them; but they were bent on hastening toward their pious design, and he was also eager to behold his brother. 'While our discourse lasted,' adds he, 'I believed myself at Rome, conversing with Cecile, the wife of Metellus; Sulpitia, the wife of Fluvius; Cornelia, of Gracchus; Mercia, of Cato; Emilia, of Scipio Africanus; and all those famous heroines who were the glory of ancient Rome. Or, to speak more suitably to our age and our religion, I thought I saw those holy virgins who made so distinguished a figure in our Christian annals, Prisque, Praxedes, Prudentiane, Agnez, &c.'

Petrarch arrived at Montrieux the 20th of April, 1353. His presence rejoiced this sacred house. Gerard was considered as its second founder, and was become a perfect anchorite, disengaged from every thing upon

earth; consummate in piety, and longing for the joys of heaven. 'I blushed,' said Petrarch, 'to behold a younger brother, who was formerly my inferior, now risen so far above me. At the same time, what a subject of joy and glory is it to have such a pious brother!'

After conversing about their old friends, and what had happened to them since their last interview, Gerard acquainted his brother with the melancholy situation which Montrieux was in at present. These good monks were persecuted by some neighbouring lords, who had made frequent attempts to pillage and ruin their order. Charles II. King of Naples, and count of Provence, king Robert, and a bishop of Marfeilles, who loved them, had protected and guarded them from the insults of these petty tyrants. 'They are worse,' says Petrarch, 'than great tyrants. The last are commonly generous, and give with one hand what they take away with the other; but the former are famished harpies, who, the more they have, the more eager they are to devour.'

On the death of the bishop of Marfeilles these hostilities were renewed, and that church



had at its head a tyrant whose troops were encamped near the monastery. When the holy monks, before break of day, were singing the praises of god, a shepherd, all in tears, came to inform them they had robbed him of his flock. When they were renewing on the altar the memory of their Saviour's passion, a frightened tenant came to acquaint them that a drove of cattle belonging to the tyrants ravaged their vines, their meadows, and their gardens. When they just began to taste the consolation of that short sleep their laws allowed, they were awakened out of it by the cries of a servant, or the sacrifician, who were attacked and beaten by these banditti. With difficulty they had saved their books, and the ornaments of their church, from these robbers. Such was their situation when Petrarch came among them. He could not hear the account of their distresses without tears. They begged he would intercede for them with the king and queen of Naples; that they would be pleased, after the example of their predecessors, to protect their house, and to send them a guard to defend them from these insults. Petrarch wrote directly to Zenobi, to desire he would implore the protection of the grand senechal, who loved this or-

der so much, that he had just built a fine house for them near Florence, and he expressed to him in the most affecting terms the misery of their situation.

The Carthusians, hoping all things from the credit of Petrarch, contrived every method the most grateful and obliging to express their acknowledgment for his letter, and their attachment towards him: and when he left them, they went with him as far as they dared, and shed many tears at parting. Petrarch returned to Vacluse, and prepared soon after for his journey to Italy. He received from all parts the most seducing proposals of establishment. Nicholas Acciajoli pressed him to settle in Naples. Many things suited him in this kingdom; the beauty of the climate, and the friends he had there, who promised him the tranquillity he wished, and were persons on whose word he could rely: but the air of this country disagreed with his constitution, from its excessive heat. Andrew Dondola, doge of Venice, had written to him to establish his residence at Venice, and proposed many pleasures to him there. 'It is time for you to settle,' says he. 'Come to Venice, and you shall find nothing to trouble your repose,' Petrarch,



in his answer, thus apologizes for his wandering life.

‘Heroes, philosophers, and apostles,’ says he, ‘have led this life. I speak of the primitive apostles; for the modern ones luxuriously repose on beds of gold, and travel in mind only over the earth and the sea. The insatiable desire of seeing and knowing all things, has led me from my youth to run over the world. This desire is quenched by age. I wish to fix; but where is the difficulty. I am like a man on a hard bed, who shifts from one side to the other, but finds no place of rest. If to be motionless is constancy, gouty men are the most constant, death more steady than they, and mountains firmer than them all.’

John, king of France, a kind and amiable prince, invited Petrarch to Paris. He owed this favor to the cardinal de Boulogne; and the reasons he gave for not accepting it were, the situation of public affairs in France, at war with England, and his dislike to the manners and customs of France. In this state of suspense he wrote to Lelius, to consult him, and to know whether he proposed continuing at Rome.

‘I wait,’ says he, ‘your answer with impa-

tience. If you advise me not to go there, I will seek a port between the Alps and the Appennines. Should I find none, I would imitate those who, having many years been voyagers on the ocean, will no more expose themselves to its tempests. I will behold only the Sorgia, and live and die with the peasants of Vacluse. One thing only will concern me; to reflect that my resurrection will be so near Avignon, that Babylon of impiety.'

Lelius replied he should not continue at Rome; and Petrarch went to Avignon the 26th of April, to take leave of his patrons and his friends. He learned there that the grand senechal of Naples had lost his son, who was the most accomplished young man of that age. His father, though he had the greatest tenderness for him, supported this affliction with firmness, and an entire resignation to the will of God. His body was carried with the pomp of royalty to the Carthusian monastery near Florence. The removing it thither cost five thousand florins. The city of Florence rendered him the greatest honors.

Petrarch wrote to Zenobi, desiring he would express to the grand senechal the interest he took in his affliction. 'I came here,' says he, 'the day before yesterday, to take my final



leave of this place. The people I have sent to Italy give me hopes I shall meet there with the retreat I wish. I shall leave this tempestuous country, never to return to it more.

‘ I am going to pass eight days at Vaucluse, to prepare for my departure.’

Petrarch went from Avignon without seeing the pope. The cardinal de Taillerand used every argument in vain to engage him to fulfil this duty. The reason he gave for his refusal was this: ‘ I feared I might infect him by my forgeries, or that he would infect me by his credulity.’



## BOOK V.

PETRARCH departed from Vaucluse at the beginning of May, 1353, and took the route of mount Genevre to go into Italy. When he had passed the mountain, and was in sight of his country, he cried out in an ecstasy, 'I salute you, holy land! dear to God and good men! I am come back to you after a long exile, never to quit you more, in the hope you will afford me an agreeable asylum while I live, and a little earth to cover me when I am dead. With what joy do I return to the embraces of my dear parent, and leave behind me the clouds and the fogs, to breathe this serene air!'

As he passed through Milan, he thought it necessary to pay his homage to John Visconti, who, we have before seen, was both king and priest there. This prince loved men of letters, and gave Petrarch the most distinguished reception, designing to fix him in his court. 'He took me affectionately by the hand', says



Petrarch, 'and conversed with me on the place of my abode, introducing by degrees his desire I would settle at Milan. "I am not ignorant," said he, "of your objections to cities, and your taste for solitude; I promise you that you shall enjoy it even in the bosom of Milan. You shall be troubled with no employment; I ask only your presence to do honor to my person, and to be the ornament of my court." Petrarch could not resist such marks of favor: overwhelmed with the goodness, and struck with the majesty, of this prince, which impressed all who beheld him, he was silent. At last he consented on these two conditions: The one, that they should give him a situation as retired as possible; the other, that he should not be obliged in any way to alter his manner of life.

The archbishop very readily granted these requests.

The house chosen for him was at the end of the town, on the west side, near the gate of Vercell, and close to the magnificent church of St. Ambrose. The air on this spot was very good. At the entrance there were two handsome towers; in front the battlements of the church; and behind, the walls of the city, and a fine view of a rich country beyond them,

extending even to the Alps. He remarked that, though it was the middle of summer, they were covered with snow. What a joy for Petrarch to live near a church dedicated to his favorite saint, of whom St. Augustine had attested so many miracles! He never entered this temple without feeling an extraordinary fervor. There was a statue of St. Ambrose, said to resemble him perfectly, and which appeared alive. Petrarch was never weary of beholding it: 'It was a most agreeable object,' says he. 'This great archbishop appeared to give me his blessing. What majesty in his countenance! What sweetness and expression in his eyes! This sight spread over my heart a lively and inexpressible tranquillity: I rejoiced that I came to Milan.' Petrarch's house was also near a little chapel where St. Ambrose and St. Augustine sung together that sacred *Te Deum*, from them spread through all the Italian churches; and it was also near the garden where St. Augustine was converted. These circumstances rendered Milan a delightful situation to Petrarch.

His friends, however, thought in a different manner. Socrates, Gui Settimo, and Philip de Cabaffole, said one to the other, 'What! this proud republican! who desired nothing but



liberty and independence ! this untamed animal, who started at the shadow of a yoke, and refused the first offices in Rome, because he would not wear chains, though of gold ! this misanthrope, who could live no where but in the silence of the country ! this preacher up of solitude, is he settled in a noisy and turbulent city !' At Florence, Boccace and his other friends could not imagine that a man so zealous for the liberty of his country would live under a tyrant who was endeavouring to subdue it. The prior of the Holy Apostles thought as they did ; but he idolized Petrarch, and would not condemn him as his other friends had done : he wrote to him these few lines :

‘ Your friends have been a little sharp upon you, and have wrote their sentiments freely, as you always desire them. You are, no doubt, of the opinion of Socrates, who said, it is good to have censurers ; if what they say is true, to correct the fault ; if not, it does no harm. You ask me what I think. I am in some things, but not wholly, of their opinion. Follow the course of fortune ; nothing is more painful and embarrassing than to have a great reputation to preserve. It is not just that a man whom philosophy has made free should become the slave of others. Do what you

like without constraint, and may you long enjoy that liberty.' Petrarch, in a letter to his friends, speaks thus in his own justification: 'You are in the right; I lay down my arms, and have no defence to make. Man has not a greater enemy than himself. St. Chrysostom has written a fine treatise to prove, that no one can justly offend us but ourselves. I have acted against my sentiments. We pass our lives in doing what we ought not, and in leaving undone what we ought to do.'

In another letter he says:

'The public condemn without hearing me, or viewing the reasons of my conduct. It was not possible for me to resist the entreaties of this great man. The requests of princes have more force than their commands. Laberius said of Julius Cæsar, "How can I refuse any thing to that man who has been refused nothing by the gods?" We cannot act so as to please all the world; as the fable of the miller, his ass, and son, is a proof.'

There arrived at Milan this year cardinal Albornos, legate from the pope, who meant to subdue the tyrants in Italy who had usurped an unjust power. This pope had great treasures, and soon raised an army, and chose for his general this cardinal, who was nobly descend-



ed : on his father's side, from Alphonso V. king of Leon ; and on his mother's, from James, king of Arragon. He was made, when very young, archbishop of Toledo ; and was in the camp of Alphonso XI. in his war against the Moors, and fought by his side. Alphonso dying in 1350, just as he was going to drive the Moors out of Spain, Albornos went to Avignon, and Clement VI. made him a cardinal. When he returned to Spain, he found that kingdom desolated by the cruelties of Don Pedro, the son of Alphonso, who, inflamed with a violent passion for Mary Padilla, treated Blanche of Bourbon, his wife, with the utmost contempt, and put all those to death who opposed his measures. Albornos spoke and wrote to him with a freedom truly apostolic, which was so ill received by this blinded prince, that the cardinal retired to Avignon in 1353.

When Innocent cast his eyes on him to execute his project in Italy, all the world agreed he could not have made a better choice, as, besides his knowledge in the military art, Albornos had other great qualities. He was well acquainted with the human heart, and knew how to avail himself of the foibles of men to compass his ends. He had a mind capable of forming great designs, and of executing them with sur-

prising celerity; and with all this, a patience that could wait the favorable moment for their ripening, when that was necessary to their success. Modest when a victor, he opened his arms to a submissive enemy: full of resources and expedients, he knew how to make advantage of the reverses of fortune: affable, though firm, he united an amiable sweetness with a just severity. Innocent VI. who knew him well, opened to him his treasures, and confided to him his spiritual and temporal authority.

The legate set out with the pope's letters to the lords of Italy, traversed the Alps, and arrived at Milan in September. This enterprise did not please John Visconti, who held a secret union with the usurpers, and feared he must give up Bologna, which he held only from a treaty with the former pope. Things were now changed, and women no longer governed. Innocent, of an austere temper, and determined on reformation, pursued a very different plan from his predecessor. The legate was, however, received at Milan with infinite respect and submission, agreeable to the policy of its prince. His expences, and those of his numerous train, were defrayed, and he was treated with all possible magnificence. John



Viscomti, with his two nephews, went to meet him two miles from the city, attended by an immense concourse of people, expressing the greatest joy ! Petrarch was with the Viscomtis on this occasion ; and, in the violence of the crowd, his horse slipping with his hind legs into a ditch, he would have been crushed had he fallen : but Galeas Viscomti dismounting, saved him from this imminent danger.

The legate treated Petrarch, who little expected it, with the utmost distinction ; and, after granting all he asked for his friends, pressed him to ask something worthy his own acceptance. Petrarch replied, ‘ When I ask for my friends, is it not the same as for myself ? Have I not the highest satisfaction in obtaining favors for them ? I have long put a rein on my own desires ; of what then can I stand in need ? ’

After the departure of the legate, Petrarch went into the country, to unbend his mind from the fatigues it had undergone ; from whence, some time after, he wrote this letter to a friend :

‘ You have heard how much my peace has been disturbed, and my leisure broken in upon, by an importunate crowd, and unforeseen occupations. The legate has left Milan, and

was received at Florence with general applause ; and I am again in my retreat. I have been long free, happy, and master of my time ; but I feel at present that liberty and leisure are only for souls of consummate virtue. Alas ! that is not my state. Nothing is more dangerous for a heart subject to the passions, than to be free, idle, and alone. The snares of voluptuousness are then more dangerous, and corrupt thoughts gain an easier entrance : above all, love, that seducing tormentor, from whom I concluded I had nothing more to fear. I shall consult a faithful physician, and suffer with patience the rudest applications of his skilful hand to remove every lurking disease.' Petrarch doubtless refers here to his old passion for Laura reviving in solitude, and not a new attachment.

Soon after the departure of the legate, there arrived news at Milan, that the fleet of the Genoese was entirely destroyed by the Venetians and Catalonians, near the island of Sardinia. The courier that brought this news to Milan, gave a moving account of the state of the Genoese. Not a family in it but had lost some relation. A great part of the nobility perished : nothing but cries and groans were heard in the streets. Petrarch was going to



write, to console and re-animate them, but he was told they were driven to despair. He trembled at this news, and flung down his pen.

‘Cities,’ says he, ‘and the world itself, have their old age, and, like men, they tend onward to destruction. Sallust with reason says, that all that rises sets, and every thing which grows decays.’ John Viscomti had views on Genoa, which was a port conveniently situated for him. He invested it on all sides by land, and the enemies blocked it up by sea; so that they were reduced to famine. His partizans insinuated to the Genoese, that they had no other remedy, than to put themselves under the protection of this lord. The Genoese did not long deliberate; they sent a solemn deputation to John Viscomti. ‘There was a decent and even respectable grief,’ says Petrarch, ‘in these messengers. Statius says, there is even dignity in the unhappy.’

John Viscomti convened his counsellors: Petrarch was one of them. The chief of the deputation spoke, and said, ‘We come, by order of the people of Genoa, to offer you the city of Genoa, its inhabitants, their sea, and their land, their goods, their hopes, and estates, and every thing that belongs to them, both sacred and

profane, from Corvo to Monaco, on certain conditions that shall be agreed on.' The prince answered, that he knew the difficulties of the enterprize; but, depending on divine more than human aid, he would accept their proposals; that he would engage to protect them, and to render justice to all the world; and that not to extend his dominion, but out of compassion to an oppressed people. He concluded by beseeching God and all the saints to succeed his designs. Petrarch was desired to prepare an answer, but he excused himself on the shortness of the time assigned for composing it.

The event justified the step they had taken. The city changed its appearance the moment the archbishop took possession; plenty was restored: and after deposing the doge, he took the reins of government into his own hands. He gave them money to arm their galleys, and renew their commerce. He had the road widened from Genoa to Nice, which alarmed the people of Provence, so much was his power dreaded even out of Italy. Among other improvements, he gave a clock to the city, a great curiosity in that age.

Petrarch, fatigued with the tumults of the city, went a little tour to the castle of Colom-ban, built by the emperor Barbarossa in his



journey to Italy, 1164. It belongs now to the Carthusians. He thus describes it :

‘ This famous castle, fortified by nature and art, is situated on a rich hill, at the bottom of which runs the Lambro, a small but clear river, which washes the town of Monca, and then falls into the Po. Towards the west there is a view of Pavia, Plaisance, and Cremona : to the north, the Alps which separate Italy from Germany, and are always covered with snow. The Appennine, and its numberless cities, are to the south ; and the Po, taking an immense course, winds its stream along, and fertilizes this beautiful country.’

Petrarch could not view this spot without recalling the idea of his beloved solitude at Vacluse. He had just received a letter from Socrates, who informed him he was there with Gui Settimo. The latter was to have accompanied Petrarch into Italy, but was prevented by sickness ; and when he recovered, the heats were too violent to attempt it. Petrarch wrote to him, to express his regret that he was not there to do the honors of his little house. ‘ You are now,’ says he, ‘ in the temple of peace, and the asylum of repose. If you take my advice, you will often come thither, to relieve yourself from the fatigues and bustles of

a court. Make use of my books, who weep for the absence of their master, and the death of their guardian. My garden implores your care, and that of Socrates, to comfort it for my absence, and to keep it in repair. Plant some trees that shall be a shade to us in old age, which we will pass there together, if the destinies shall permit. My house is yours; my little bed will not miss its master, if you vouchsafe to sleep in it.' This letter he formed on that delightful mountain, seated on the lawn, under the shade of a chestnut, and wrote it in the castle, where he slept that night. They prepared for him a magnificent chamber, and a bed which was not, says he, the bed of a poet or a philosopher.

Petrarch, when he called Vaucluse the temple of peace, did not foresee the disaster that happened soon after. A band of robbers, who had committed many robberies in that part of the country, went to Petrarch's house, which they set on fire, and took every thing they could find. An old arch stopped the rage of the flames. The son of the fisherman, who had feared this, and was now its keeper, had carried to the castle some books Petrarch had left behind him. The thieves, imagining it was well defended, dared not attack it. 'Hea-



ven would not permit so invaluable a treasure,' says Petrarch, 'to fall into such vile hands.'

Petrarch found, on his return to Milan, a letter from the emperor, in which he gives many political reasons for not coming sooner to the assistance of Italy. 'You have read,' says he, 'the answer of Augustus in the happiest years of Rome to those who offered him the sceptre. You know not the burden of empire: we who are charged with it feel this truth. It is love for mankind alone that can surmount the difficulties of government. Viewing the disorders of Rome and Italy, we have resolved, notwithstanding our own weak condition, to lend our aid; but it appeared as a capital disease, to deserve a very attentive examination. Friend, we must compare the present with the past, to re-establish the lustre of the one, and to purge the infamy of the other. But physicians have agreed, and Cæsars have proved, that, before we employ instruments, every method should be tried. We advise, therefore, and wait for succours, that we may do nothing unworthy or unbecoming of an emperor. We wish to discourse with you, who hold so high a rank on Parnassus, and we look upon you as one of our most faithful subjects.'

As this letter was long in coming, Petrarch begins his answer with pleasantry. 'I find,' says he, 'it is as difficult for your couriers and dispatches to pass the Alps, as your person and your legions.' He had pressed the emperor some time before this to come immediately into Italy, and take possession of the empire. 'I hoped,' adds he, 'I had persuaded you; but I perceive my error. You think differently from me, and will be believed; for you hold the reins of the earth and the helm of the sea. What consoles me is, that, though you do not adopt my opinion, you will approve my zeal; and I cannot receive a greater recompence than this.'

In this answer he speaks thus concerning Rienzi: 'How much easier is it for you to re-establish the empire of Rome, than it was for Romulus to lay its foundation on the rocks, in the midst of those nations who opposed him! or for Cæsar to become master of this empire, at the time when its republic was most flourishing! As a proof of this, behold the man who rose up in its most declining period; and though neither king, consul, nor patrician; nay, scarcely known as a Roman citizen; neither distinguished by the titles of his ancestors, nor by his own virtues, yet dared to declare



himself the restorer of the public liberty ! What title could be more splendid for a private man ? Tuscany submitted to him immediately ; Italy followed her example. Europe, and the whole world, were set in motion. We have seen this ; it is not a thing that we only read of in history. Justice, peace, faith, and safety, returned ; and the traces of the golden age began to appear upon earth. In the most brilliant moment of success he gave up his enterprize. I accuse no one ; I will neither condemn nor absolve. This man took the least title in Rome. If the name of Tribune could produce such an effect, what cannot be done with the title of Cæsar ?

1354. Soon after this a league was formed by the lords of Padua, Modena, Mantua, and Venice, with the emperor, who was to be crowned at Rome. This confederacy alarmed John Visconti ; and he sent to invite the emperor to come and receive the crown at Milan, and he chose Petrarch for this embassy. He wished for repose, and did not care to traverse the mountains in winter ; but he could not resist the insinuating manners of this prince. Before he set out on this embassy, he received the present of a Greek Homer from the proctor of Romania, whom he knew at Avignon,

when sent there by the emperor of Constantinople to negotiate the union of the Greek and Latin churches. He was a man of merit and genius; and the present he made to Petrarch was rare; there was not one besides this in Italy; they had only the bad translation of Homer by Pindar in Latin verse.

Petrarch acknowledged the favor in the following lines :

‘ You could not have made a present more agreeable to me, or more noble and worthy of you : why am I not able to add also, as well deserved by me ? Could you have joined yourself with it to serve me as a guide, it would have been inestimable. But I lost the two ears through which I understood Homer ; the one by death, the other by absence. The Homer you have sent is, however, dear to me ; and still more so, because it is the pure original emanations from his celestial mind. Macrobius calls this poet the source of all imagination. I embrace this divine author, and return you a thousand thanks for having adorned my house with this king of poets, and prince of philosophers.

‘ I shall be proud of two such guests as Homer and Plato in their own habit ; and I despair not of understanding them more per-



fectly hereafter: Cato was older than I am when he began to learn Greek. Command me, if I can serve you in any thing; and grant me some opportunity of repaying the many debts I owe you. Success, they say, inspires confidence: I find it so, and dare yet beg you to send me, at your convenience, Hesiod and Euripides. I know not why my name is more spoken of in the west than it ought to be: if you judge it proper, make it known in the east; that by your means the emperor of Constantinople may not disdain the man who has been honored by the emperor of Rome.

John Cantacuzene was at this time emperor of Constantinople, and he merited such a compliment from Petrarch. He was a man of genius and letters, and has left us a well written history of what passed under his own reign, and that of Andronicus Paleologus, his predecessor.

A few days after this Petrarch went on his embassy, one great point of which was to treat with the Venetians: but, notwithstanding his eloquence, and his friendship with the doge, he could not succeed. The consequence was, that the Genoese, by the assistance of John Visconti, armed twenty-three gallies, with which they made great havock in a descent on the

Venetian coast, who thought themselves secure from all attack. This news spread horror and dismay. Andrew Dondolo took every measure that wisdom could suggest at this juncture, but his precautions were ineffectual. The shock this surprise gave him impaired his health : he languished from this time, and died the 8th of September, 1354, extremely regretted by all.

‘ He was,’ says Petrarch, ‘ a man of virtue and integrity, full of love and zeal for the republic ; wise, eloquent, prudent, kind, and affable. He had but one fault ; he loved war, and it was not suited to his character or manners. I spoke and wrote to him on this subject with the greatest freedom : he had the goodness to receive it kindly, for he knew my heart ; but the confidence he was inspired with from his last victory over the Genoese caused him to reject my advice. He judged of the goodness of a cause by the event : and often repeated to me what Scipio said to Hannibal, and Lucan puts into the mouth of Cæsar : “ The success of this army shall prove the justice of its cause ; the vanquished shall be the guilty side.” Fortune conferred a favor on this prince in the death it sent him ; for had he lived a little longer, he would have seen the total ruin of his



country, over whom the Genoese gained, soon after this, a complete victory.'

In October, 1354, Petrarch lost a friend, whose bounty and favor towards him had sincerely attached his heart; this was John Visconti. He had a small lump on his forehead, just above his eye-brow: he had it cut off, and died in the night, without having time to receive the sacraments. Petrarch speaks favorably of this great man, in which he agrees with many contemporary historians. Except Villani, they all allow that John Visconti treated his subjects with great humanity; that he distributed justice with exactness, and was very charitable to the poor. It is owned he was ambitious, and every thing he did was accompanied with dignity. His name was renowned in the most distant countries, and respected even by the Turks. He was formed to please the fair sex; for he was handsome, gay, generous, and courageous; but his great passion was ambition, and he was feared throughout Italy. It is reported, however, that when the Romans would have yielded to his authority, he refused them, saying, 'Rome belongs to the pope, and to the emperor.' He was interred in the great church of Milan, where his mausoleum remains with this epitaph:

‘Passenger, wouldst thou know the nothingness of all human power and grandeur, learn what I was, and behold what I am. I had immense treasures, vast palaces, superb cities: my name alone made all Italy tremble. Of what use is all this to me now? Behold me shut up within a stone, and devoured by worms.’

John Viscomti had three nephews, who were his heirs, and took possession of his estates, without the least contention, on the day marked for that purpose by an astrologer, without whose art nothing of any importance was undertaken in that age. Petrarch was desired to address the people convoked to this ceremony. In the middle of his harangue, the astrologer cried out, the moment was come, and it would be dangerous to let it pass. Petrarch, though he had the greatest contempt for this superstitious science, gave way to their prejudices, and stopped directly. The astrologer, astonished at it, said to him, ‘There is yet one moment more; you may go on.’ ‘I have nothing more to say,’ replied Petrarch; ‘and I know no tale with which I can amuse the assembly.’ The astrologer was disconcerted, and rubbed his forehead; while some of the auditors were laughing, and others wondering at his assurance;



when he cried out again, 'The happy infant is come;' on which an old officer carried three white stakes, like the pallisades of a town, and gave one to each of the three brothers, which finished the ceremony.

'The astrologer,' says Petrarch, 'was older and wiser than me. I loved, and should have been still more attached to him, if he had not been an astrologer. I sometimes joked, and sometimes reproached, him for his profession. One day, when I had been sharper with him than usual, he replied, with a sigh, "Friend, you are in the right: I think as you do; but I have a wife and children." This answer touched me so much, that I never spoke again to him on that subject.'

There was a great difference in the character of the three Viscomtis. Matthew, the eldest, hated business, and led an idle drunken life; all his pleasure was hawking, and every amusement which women could partake of. It is recorded in the annals of the church, that he passed the days and nights in continual debauchery, always surrounded by the infamous part of the sex.

Barnabas, the second brother, was cruel and morose, breathing nothing but war and slaughter; the exercise of which, added to his natural

ferocity, made him afterwards a monster of tyranny and cruelty. He married the daughter of Martin de Lescale, who was called the queen from the great airs she put on, and her love of pomp and ostentation. She lay-in this year of a boy, and did Petrarch the honor to choose him for its godfather. He called him Mark; gave him a cup of gold; and made a Latin poem on the occasion, in which he celebrated all the great men who had borne that name.

Galeas, the younger brother, had great sweetness of temper and goodness of mind. He loved hunting, but only as an amusement. He made war with courage and judgment, but he preferred peace. Handsome, well made, and agreeable, he pleased and loved the fair sex; but he kept this affection within bounds. He idolized Petrarch, and engaged him to continue at Milan. Petrarch attached himself sincerely to this prince, whom he speaks of in the highest manner.

These brothers perceived of what consequence it was to be firmly united against the league that threatened them, headed by the emperor. Barnabas was charged with the military affairs; all the rest lay upon Galeas. Matthew, or the eldest, presided over all in name, but did not interfere in any thing. They did



nothing of any importance without consulting Petrarch, and this confidence retained him at Milan.

The deaths of the doge of Venice and John Viscomti were followed by that of Rienzi, whose tragic end we will briefly relate. He continued in prison during the life of Clement. Innocent viewed Rienzi in a different light from his predecessor, who had suffered him to live, but thought his madness required confinement. Rome was at this time in a worse state than ever; it was a scene of violence and bloodshed. The pope sent Rienzi to cardinal Albornos, with orders to the cardinal to re-establish him at Rome when he saw a convenient opportunity: and wrote these lines with him:

‘As a remedy for the evils of Rome, we have sent our dear son, Nicholas Rienzi, a Roman chevalier, in the hope that, being enlightened by adversity, he will renounce all his fantastic visions, and employ the great talents God has given him to suppress the wicked, and to establish peace. We have absolved him from the censure and punishment he was under, and send him to you freed from all bonds.’

Cardinal Albornos, who knew mankind better than the pope, thought differently of Rienzi, and made no great haste to re-establish him.

Francis Baroncelli, the writer for the senate, took it into his head to set himself in Rienzi's place, without his eloquence and talents. But this novelty lasted only four months. He abandoned himself to excess and cruelty, and was massacred ; after which the people submitted to the legate.

Rienzi being thus set aside, desired leave to go to Rome, which the cardinal granted, giving him the letters patent from the pope. Thus established senator, he obliged the nobility to take the oath of fidelity. The successor of the Colonnas, shut up in his palace at Palestrina, a place of such strength that it required an army to besiege it, refused, and braved his deputies to the very gates of Rome. Rienzi had no money to raise forces ; but the chevalier de Montrial, the chief of the banditti who infested the country round, coming to Rome to see his brothers, Rienzi had him stopped and beheaded, and seized a part of the treasures he had amassed. The people were displeased at this ; but much more so when he put to death Pandolf, a good man, loved and respected by all. They rose up against Rienzi. Abandoned by every one, he put on his armour, and came on the balcony where he used to harangue, making signs to be heard, and crying out, ' Long live the people !'



But finding all in vain, he ordered the doors of the capitol to be thrown open, hoping to save himself during the pillage. He blackened his face, put on the habit of a peasant, and throwing a pillow over his head, which covered his face, he ran down the stairs, crying out, 'Ascend ! ascend ! There is good spoil.' Some one, who knew his voice, snatched off the pillow, saying, 'Stop ! whither art thou running ?' His bracelets of gold, which he had forgot to take off, betrayed him. They brought him to the place where he had passed so many sentences of death. In this ridiculous disguise he was an hour exposed to the rabble, without saying a word, or being insulted by any one : such was the awe in which they stood of him ! At last one of them plunged a poignard into his breast, and it was immediately followed by a thousand others. Such was the end of this mad tribune !

It does not appear, from the writings of Petrarch, that he had the least connection with, or concern in, Rienzi's re-establishment : he was wholly engaged, at present, with the arrival of the emperor, who was expected every day in Italy. He came to Mantua in October, after having been at Padua, where he was magnificently received. From Mantua he wrote

to Petrarch, to invite him to come there, and expressed an extreme desire to see him. Petrarch, delighted with so flattering a distinction, was not stopped by the extreme bad weather. It froze so hard, that they said the emperor had brought with him the German frosts. The old men in Italy declared they had never felt such severe cold. The roads were like glass; the horses, though frost-shod, could scarcely keep on their feet. Happily there fell a great quantity of snow, which made the roads passable. Petrarch set out in so thick a fog, he could not distinguish one object around. Some armed soldiers came now and then out of their ambuscades. 'They alarmed, but did me no hurt,' says he, 'as they belonged to the lords of Milan.' The first night he was obliged to stop on the banks of the river Chiofi, it being too late to pass over it. The next day he wanted to set out before sun-rise: his attendants murmured at being exposed to so violent a cold, which could hardly be supported even in bed. As he came out of the inn, he saw the emperor's messenger. He came that night from Cremona: his people were frozen, and could not move a step farther. 'As to himself,' says Petrarch, 'he had the air of a man who is walking by moon-light in a fine summer's



night. Never was there a body more hardened to fatigue, or less sensible of the injuries of the weather.' Petrarch, with all his diligence, was four days upon the road. The emperor expressed his obligation to him for coming in such weather, and told him he had seldom felt so sharp a frost in Germany. Petrarch answered, that Providence would inure the Germans by degrees to the climate of Italy. He thus relates his reception and discourse with this prince. 'The emperor received me with such kind and easy manners, as had neither the appearance of imperial pomp, nor German formality: he lived with me as with his equal. We passed sometimes whole days in discoursing, from the break of day till night, as if he had no other employment. He spoke to me of my works, and expressed a great desire to see them; above all, that which treats of illustrious men. I told him that I required leisure and repose to finish this work. He gave me to understand, he wished it to appear with his name. I replied with that freedom with which nature endued me, and which custom has confirmed, and years have strengthened, "Great prince! there requires for this, only virtue on your part, and leisure on mine."

'He desired me to explain myself; and I

said, "Time is necessary for a work of this kind, in which I propose to insert great things in a little space. On your side, you must labour to merit your name at the head of my book. It is not sufficient for that to wear a crown, or bear a superior title; your virtue and great actions must rank you among those famous men whose characters will be sketched out in this work. Live in such a manner that, after having read the lives of your illustrious predecessors, you shall deserve that yours also should be read by posterity."

' The emperor shewed, by a smile, and a serene countenance, that my liberty had not displeased him. I took this occasion to present him with some medals of emperors in gold and silver, which were my delight. In the collection there was one of Augustus in high preservation: he appeared alive! "Here," said I, "are the great men whose place you occupy, and who ought to serve as examples. These medals are dear to me. I should not have given them to any other; but they are yours by right." I then gave him an abstract of their lives, with a word here and there to excite his imitation of them. He seemed to listen to me with pleasure, and said he had never received so agreeable a present. I should never end, was I to



give an account of all the conversations I had with this prince. He desired me one day to relate my history from infancy ; I made every possible excuse, but he would be obeyed. He was very attentive ; and, if I omitted any thing from forgetfulness, or the fear of tiring out his patience, he reminded me of it. I was astonished to find him better informed than myself of the minutest circumstances of my life.' [It will be, no doubt, recollected, that this was the prince who, on a visit to the pope with his father, then emperor, selected Laura from the ladies around her, to pay her the most particular marks of respect and attention.]

' After this, the emperor asked me what were my projects, and my future plan of life ? " My will is good," said I ; " but habit prevails over it. I am like the sea, buffeted by contrary winds." " I understand you," said he ; " but you do not answer my question. What kind of life would be most agreeable, and that you would prefer to all others ?" " A life of solitude," I replied, without hesitation. " There is none more sure, more tranquil, more agreeable, or which suits me so well. If I am able, I will seek it at its source ; that is to say, in woods and in mountains, as I have already done : if not, I will try to enjoy it even in the midst of cities,"

“This,” said he, smiling, “is what I wished to bring you to; and that you should own an error I would undertake to combat, though I am partly of your way of thinking.” “Take care,” replied I; “you will not fight with equal weapons. I know the vulgar think differently on this head; but I have the greatest of authorities on my side, beside experience, that it becomes not a prince like you to think as the vulgar; and I would even take the inhabitants of cities themselves for my judges in this cause. I have just written a little treatise on this subject.” “I know it,” returned the emperor with vivacity; “and if I find that book, I will throw it into the fire.” “I must then take care,” replied I, “it never falls in your hands.”

‘We had long and frequent disputes of this sort, always seasoned with the salt of good humour; and I must confess that the emperor combated my solitary system with surprising energy, and boasted he had gained the victory. He begged of me to accompany him to Rome. “It is not sufficient for me,” said he, “to see that celebrated city with my own eyes; I wish to see it through yours, which are so much clearer than mine. I shall want you also in some of the cities of Tuscany.” “Rome and Cæsar! these are, indeed, my idols,” I replied;



“and it would have delighted me to go to Rome with Cæsar, but many obstacles oppose :” and this was a new subject of dispute till we separated. He used every obliging persuasion ; and I may well boast that Dionysius the tyrant was not kinder to Plato than Cæsar was to me.’

1355. This pacific prince, who came into Italy entirely to make peace, negotiated one with the Viscomtis in particular, who had thirty thousand troops in good order. They made the emperor presents, but exacted that he should not enter Milan ; and that the troops that followed him should be disarmed. Charles had the weakness to submit to these conditions : his love of peace prevailed over every other consideration. The Viscomtis ordered that his expences should be defrayed while in their territories, and that of his three thousand disarmed cavaliers, commanding none of their subjects to receive any payment or reward. Galeas Viscomti came out to meet him, and conducted him to the palace destined for him. The next day the emperor went to the abby of Chioravalle, where dinner was prepared for him, and where Barnabas presented him, on his own part, and on his brothers, with thirty fine horses, richly harnessed. When

they came to the gates of Milan, the emperor, invited by the two brothers to enter, answered, that could not be, for he would keep the word he had given. The Viscomtis politely told him that it was a favor they had asked, because they supposed the troops of the confederate lords would attend him; but that such a precaution could never regard his person, whose presence would do them great honor; and that, if he judged it necessary, they would absolve him of the promise he had made. The emperor insisted no farther, and entered with them the fourth of January, 1355. He was received with drums, trumpets, and other instruments, which made so loud a noise, that 'had Heaven thundered, it could not,' says Petrarch, 'have been heard: it was more like a tumult than a feast.' They gave the prince and his attendants a palace magnificently furnished, and every thing he could desire. The three brothers then paid homage to him, and declared they held all they possessed from his authority, and would only employ it in his service.

The next day, willing to give the emperor a high idea of their power, they made a general review of all their troops, the cavalry and infantry, to which they joined some companies



of citizens, well mounted, and magnificently dressed, to add to the parade; and they told him that, besides these, their forts and castles were all furnished with good garrisons.

The emperor was not much at his ease in the midst of so many troops, shut up in the city, and at the mercy of those whom he had some reason to suspect. However, he put a good face on the matter, and appeared everywhere with a countenance which hid the feelings of his heart. Petrarch scarcely ever left him; and the prince employed every moment in conversing with him he could steal from public affairs, and these fatiguing ceremonies. He received the iron crown in the church of St. Ambrose from the hands of Robert Visconti, archbishop of Milan, in the presence of the patriarch of Aquilon, his brother, and a great number of lords and bishops. In this ceremony the emperor made knights of John Galeas, son of Galeas Visconti, and Blanche of Savoy; and Mark, son of Barnabas, and his queen; and two infants only two years old. The three brothers were declared vicars of the empire for all the estates they possessed in Italy. They gave to the emperor fifty thousand florins of gold, twelve horses covered with a fine cloth lined with ermine, and six hundred fol-

diers to escort him to Rome. A bishop had predicted that the eagle should submit to the viper: as the viper was painted on the Milanese standards, this prophecy seemed to be verified. The emperor looked upon himself at Milan to be in a magnificent prison: he got out of it as soon as he could, and his impatience caused him to lose his imperial gravity. Villani says that he ran through the states of the Viscomtis with the precipitation of a merchant who is going to a fair: and he did not fairly breathe till he was out of their dominions. Petrarch accompanied him five miles beyond Placentia. The prince renewed his entreaties that he would go with him to Rome. Petrarch excused himself with all the civility possible, and with much difficulty obtained leave to depart. When they were bidding farewell, a Tuscan knight, in the train of the emperor, took Petrarch by the hand, and, turning to the emperor, said to him, 'This is the man of whom I have so often spoken to you: he will sing your praise, if you deserve it: but be assured, he knows when to speak and when to be silent.' Such freedom of speech did the emperor indulge to those who were attached to his person.

On his return to Milan, Petrarch desired nothing so much as to go and enjoy in solitude



the repose he had so long been deprived of. He compares his condition to that of a thirsty stag, who, stunned with the noise of the dogs, seeks the cool stream and the silent shade. In his retreat he reflected on the corrupt manners of the age he lived in: the excesses he witnessed in the Germans who were in the emperor's train gave rise to these soliloquies. Seneca says, Every one complains of his own age.

At this time Lelius wrote a letter to Petrarch from Avignon, to inform him of his departure from Pisa and Rome, and to desire a letter of recommendation from him to the emperor. Petrarch immediately wrote this letter.

‘Great prince! your goodness emboldens me to present to you my other self. The bearer of this letter to your footstool is a Roman citizen, ennobled by birth, but still more ennobled by his virtues. I should never end, was I to speak of his prudence, his fidelity, his industry, and eloquence; and I would rather you should form an idea of him from your own judgment, which nothing escapes, and which cannot be deceived. If you honor me with so much confidence, be assured that he is a man worthy of your favor. Add to this, that

he has been always attached to your person, your friends, and your empire. Stephen Colonna, that renowned hero, whose zeal for the emperor Henry VII. your royal grandfather, is known to all the world, loved Lelius as his son. Alas ! that good old man sighed for your arrival, as Simeon did for that of the Messiah ; but death defrauded him of this pleasure. His children cherished Lelius as their brother ; and John Colonna, his grandson, looked upon him as his father. I remember to have seen you at Avignon, leaning familiarly upon his shoulder, and caressing him with the greatest affection. Lelius possessed the confidence of all this noble family. After passing his infancy with one branch, and his youth with another, he consecrated to them every moment of his life ; and would have ended it with them, if death had not cut down, almost at one stroke, a family devoted to your service. Imagine them all at your feet, beseeching you to protect the man they loved and esteemed, and whom they had, as it were, adopted.

‘ I will further add, that Lelius was favored with the good graces of pope Clement, whom you respected as your father, and who loved you as a son ; of the king of France, who is united to you by blood and by friendship ; and



of the cardinal de Porto, who does honor to the purple by his birth and great qualities, and with whom you are also tenderly united. After so many great names, shall I presume to add my own, and recommend him to you as my friend? Behold how far zeal and attachment can heighten my confidence !'

It is not astonishing that such a man as Petrarch describes Lelius, and the bearer of a letter from him, should be well received by the emperor. This prince treated him with the greatest distinction, carried him to Rome with him, and vouchsafed to admit him into the most intimate friendship. The emperor set out from Sienna in March with the empress and all her train, and arrived at Rome on Holy Thursday, the second of April. The two following days he visited the churches in the habit of a pilgrim. On Easter Sunday he was crowned with the empress; and in the ceremony he confirmed all the privileges of the Roman church, and all the promises he had made to the popes Clement and Innocent. When he came out of St. Peter's church, he went with a great retinue to St. John of Lateran, where he dined; and in the evening went to sleep at St. Laurent out of the walls, which was one of the promises he had given, and faith-

fully adhered to. Some historians have said, the Romans offered to make him master of Rome, or desired he would re-establish it in its former state. He replied, he would think of it; but when he was out of the city, he answered, 'It was not expedient to change the government so often, and that they should recollect their oath to the pope.' The fall of the emperors, and rise of the popes, may be placed at this period. Petrarch thought this promise of the emperor's, not to sleep in Rome, a very dishonorable one. 'The emperor,' says he, 'came only into Italy to be crowned. The successor of St. Peter, who wears his tiara on the banks of the Rhone with as much confidence as he would on the banks of the Tiber, not only suffers, but orders, him to go out of Rome: that is to say, he permits him to bear the title of emperor, and forbids him to discharge the offices that belong to it. With one hand he opens to him the temple where he is to receive the imperial crown, and with the other he shuts on him the door of the city which is the capital and seat of the empire! What a contradiction is this!'

Neri Morandi, a friend of Petrarch's, going to Rome with the emperor, had asked of Petrarch letters of recommendation: he gave him



one to his friend Paul Annibaldi. Paul had a son in the flower of his age, who was a youth of great hopes: he happened just at this time to be killed in a fray, and his enemies committed all sorts of insults on his body. The father, who beheld the sight, was struck with such horror, that he fell dead upon the spot. 'I believed,' said Petrarch, 'that the loss of so many friends, and the total extinction of the house of Colonna, had exhausted all my tears; but I have found some to shed for a man who had acquired my friendship by his virtues.'

The emperor returned to Sienna in April, where he had great conferences with cardinal Albornos, and gave him troops to reduce the tyrants of Romania: from thence he went to Pisa, where was Zanobi de Strata, the friend of Petrarch, and of the grand senechal of Naples.

Nicholas Acciajoli, who loved Zanobi, presented him to the emperor as an orator and poet of the first rank, and desired him to give him the crown of laurel, as Petrarch had received it at Rome. The emperor, who piqued himself on encouraging men of letters, granted his request, and crowned Zanobi himself, after declaring he was a great poet. To tes-

tify his acknowledgment, he made a discourse, in which he thanked the prince for having renewed in his favor the ancient custom, and promised to dedicate his talents to convey his glorious actions to posterity. After this he walked through the streets of Pisa with his laurel-crown, accompanied with the German barons, and other distinguished persons. Villani, the historian, after a short relation of this ceremony, adds a reflection very honorable to Petrarch.

‘There were in this age,’ says he, ‘two poets crowned; both of them from Florence; master Zanobi de Strata, and Signior Francis Petrarch, of an ancient and worthy family in that city. This last was crowned at Rome: his name is more known than that of Zanobi, and his reputation more extensive: he has composed a great number of works, and discoursed on the most elevated subjects: also it must be owned he began earlier, and his fame was before that of Zanobi. Neither the one nor the other are known as much as they deserve; and the taste for theological studies, which occupies our age, makes their productions appear frivolous, notwithstanding the pleasure they are capable of producing.’

There appears no work of Zanobi which



could put his name in any competition with that of Petrarch, or that gives us room to suppose he could deserve the honor done him : but the request of the grand senechal was not to be refused ; and the emperor could give a crown of laurel at a much easier rate than troops or supplies. After this ceremony, Nicholas Acciajoli went for some days to Florence, where he lost the great reputation he had acquired by the soft and dissolute life he led ; passing his days and nights in feasts, balls, and other parties of pleasure, with the beauties of that city. The Florentines received him with honor, but refused him the succours he asked, which, but for his conduct, says Villani, they would have granted. Petrarch, who had conceived a high opinion of him, was grieved when they informed him of the grand senechal's conduct, and the injury he did his reputation by such behaviour ; and he ceased corresponding with his favorite, the new poet, and soon after his elevation received this letter from the prior of the Holy Apostles.

‘ I reserve my conversation on that shadow of a Cæsar till I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I would have wrote you what I thought, if I could have given to my style all the energy I feel at my soul. You will lament

his conduct : for my part, I cannot pardon him for having crowned one of our citizens, who troubled the fountain of Parnassus. He has turned his head, in raising him to an honor he did not deserve. He was, no doubt, ignorant of the wrong he did you thereby ; and not only you, but all the world.'

Boccace was of the same opinion with the prior. He reproached Petrarch that, in his letters, he gave him the name of poet. 'I do not merit this title,' said Boccace, 'having never had the honor to be crowned with laurel.' 'What,' replied Petrarch, 'if there were no laurel, must the Muses then keep silence ? Do not you think as fine verses may be made under an oak or chestnut ?' And, speaking of this coronation in another letter, he adds, 'a barbarous laurel ornaments a head nourished by the Muses of Anania ; a German censor dares to give his judgment of the fine Transalpine wits : really that is not supportable !'

Some days after this the emperor granted honors and rewards of another nature to the famous Bortoli, then at Pisa, the greatest lawyer of his age : he made him his counsellor, gave him the arms of Bohemia, and several other privileges. In the emperor's return through Italy, he and his empress met with



many affronts. The gates of most places were shut against him. Enraged at such treatment, after being crowned emperor, he made haste to pass the Alps with great treasure, but little honor. 'His riches were increased,' says Villani, 'but his fame was diminished.' Petrarch, who wanted him to reside in Italy, struck with his sudden departure, took up the pen, and, in indignation, wrote him this letter:

'Ah, Cæsar! how ungrateful are you! How little do you know the value of things! What your grandfather and others have pursued with labour and blood, you have obtained with ease and safety, and have as readily abandoned. You renounce all, to return to your barbarous country. I dare not say all I could, all I ought to say: persuaded that your flight causes you much chagrin, I will not augment it. Go then, since you will; but never forget, that no prince before you ever renounced so well-founded, so glorious a prospect!

'Wisdom is not an hereditary portion; I see it: not that I dispute your knowledge of government, and your military talents, of which you have given us so many proofs; it is inclination you want; it is emulation, the source of all great and glorious actions. Listen to what your grandfather and father would say

were they to present themselves before you as you pass the Alps : “ You have gained much, great Cæsar, by a journey so long expected, and by so precipitate a return ! You bring back with you a crown of iron, a crown of gold, and an empty title. They call you emperor of the Romans, though you are in reality only king of Bohemia. Would to God you were not even that : perhaps your ambition, enclosed in narrower bounds, would make some effort to extend itself, and that your wants would excite you to recover your patrimony.” Lelius brought me your farewell ; it cut me to the heart ; and he presented me from you with an antique of Cæsar. If that medal could have spoken, what would it not have said against your making so shameful a retreat ! Adieu, Cæsar ! compare what you have forsaken to what you are going to possess !

Peace was at this time concluded between the Venetians and Genoese, through the mediation of the Viscomtis. It cost two hundred thousand florins to the Venetians while the treaty was in agitation. The doge that succeeded Dondolo, who was called Marin Fabier, a venerable old man, about fourscore years of age, was beheaded, it is supposed, on the following account. He had a handsome wife,



who was unfaithful to him. A young Venetian nobleman, of great fortune, who made love to one of the maids of honor, having received a very rough reprimand from the doge for some misconduct he had been guilty of, to revenge the affront, he got this motto wrote over the ducal chair: 'Marin Fabier has a handsome wife he maintains, and another possesses her.' The enraged doge could obtain no more from the council, than the imprisonment of this young nobleman for a month. Stung with the little regard the people shewed for his authority, he plotted to exterminate the order of nobles, and make himself sole lord of Venice. The conspiracy was discovered, and Marin Fabier was beheaded. He was fond of Petrarch, who says, 'I knew him formerly: he had more reputation than merit, more courage than prudence. Let his example teach his successors, that they are the chiefs, but not the masters, of the republic; or rather its honorable servants.'

When Petrarch was re-established at Milan, he sent for his son John from Verona, who was now eighteen years of age, to have his education finished under his own eye. John had a great affection for a young man whom he had known at Parma and at Verona, where

he was secretary to Azon de Correge; his name was Modio. He was a youth of genius and knowledge, and a tolerable poet.

Petrarch thought he could not do a better thing than engage this young man to come and live with him, to finish the education of his son, and to assist him in his literary works. Accordingly he wrote him this letter of invitation :

‘ I do not know what my son has written, but I know he wishes to be informed whether you can come and take up your residence with us. That you may determine with the more ease, I will acquaint you with the nature and conditions of the situation we propose to you. I am sensible the courts of princes are open to you : but if I know your character, you would prefer our poverty to their riches ; an humble independence with a friend, above the treasures of the east under a master. It is not a servant I seek in you, it is a friend. I propose not to you to labour for us, but to live as we do ; to be the master of your employment, and to hold the reins of your life. I flatter myself that my son, who has loved and admired you from his infancy, will make a great progress under your direction. If you choose it, you shall be also the associate of my studies, and at liberty to



copy my trifles; they will please me better when wrote out by your hand; you will discover the faults that have escaped me. I do not offer you mountains of gold, palaces of marble, or purple robes; but a comfortable mediocrity, a temperate and almost philosophic cheer, retirement, leisure, and liberty. It may surprise you I should offer to another what I possess not myself; but do we not every day behold physicians, who are indisposed themselves, give relief and health to others? The lustre of an empty name, which importunes me, though I do not desire it, prevents my enjoyment of freedom and solitude; but you will possess both, at least till you are known. This is all I can offer you: I shall be happy if you can make it agreeable to you to partake my studies, and engage in this manner of life. I forgot our being near St. Ambrose, which may perhaps have more influence with you than all I have said!

Modio did not accept this kind invitation; a principle of gratitude to Azon de Corregge prevented him. In a great revolution at Verona, Azon had been obliged to leave that city; his estates were confiscated, and his wife and children imprisoned. Modio, whose heart was filled with affection and honor, and who loved

Azon, would not abandon him in this condition. He followed him, and devoted himself to the education of his children. This increased Petrarch's esteem for his character, and a very affectionate correspondence took place between them.

The month of September was always critical to Petrarch; he generally suffered in this season from a tertian fever. 'I was obliged,' says he, 'the fits were so violent, to pass the whole of the month in bed. Had it lasted much longer, it must have outlived me.' In this sickness news was brought him that the eldest of the Viscomtis was found dead in his bed. His brothers were accused of poisoning him, from the following circumstance: One evening, when they were supping together, Galeas and Barnabas said to Matthew, 'It is a fine thing to be a sovereign.' 'Yes,' replied Matthew, 'when one has no partners.' From this answer it was supposed he meant to get rid of them, and that they got the start of him. Villani says, that he died like a dog, without making confession; and that his end was worthy of his life, which was spent in such horrible debauchery, that it does not seem necessary to ascribe the death that followed it to poison. Petrarch, though he was not touched with the



death of such a man, was extremely affected with the rumour that reflected on Galeas, to whom he was tenderly attached: he would doubtless have left his court, if he had thought him guilty. As to Barnabas, there was no cruelty he was not capable of; he had put to death, for some unknown reason, a priest, sent by the pope to preach the crusade against the tyrants of Romania: he had him roasted alive in a sort of iron tub, with bars like a gridiron, and a handle by which they kept turning it before the fire like a spit. Galeas and Barnabas divided the estates of Matthew.

Petrarch began to recover in October, and his health was quite re-established by a letter from his dear Barbatus. It was full of enthusiasm and friendship, and addressed to Francis Petrarch, the king of poets. The monks had told Barbate, that in all Italy he had this title. Petrarch, after politely joking his friend for his blind partiality, and refusing with some heat the title he assigned him, wrote as follows:

‘Before the Muses passed from Greece to Italy, it was easy to be the king of poets. What respect was paid to the poet Lucilius! To dare to criticise him was sacrilege! What a reputation had Revius and Plautus! We do them justice at present, but their wit and talents do

not equal their fame: to read their epitaphs, you would believe them as great as Homer and Virgil! Our age is not so easy; it exacts from poets, works more correct and refined. We are surrounded with dainty wits, who are not lavish of their praises. Take care, my dear Barbatus, that you do not wrong me by your friendship, and overwhelm me with a false title. I should fear the being accused of high treason, if I took the honor you would give me! Where do you pretend my kingdom is placed? Which are its boundaries? There are but two kingdoms of poets, Greece and Italy. The venerable fire of Mæonia occupies the first, and the shepherd of Mantua the last. For myself, I can only reign in my Transalpine solitude, and on the banks of the Sorgia. It is there alone I can say with Ovid, in his exile among the Scythians, Here there is no one wittier than myself.'

At the beginning of the year 1356, there came to Milan, to serve under Galeas, who made him general of his cavalry, Pandolphe, a descendant of the ancient house of Malateste. He was a cavalier of a noble figure, and a fine countenance; and, though brave and warlike, he loved letters and the Muses. The works of Petrarch had made such an impres-



sion on him, that he sent a painter to take his picture, who made him pay very dear for a bad likeness. He was delighted with the society of Petrarch, with whom he spent every leisure moment. The great fatigues he had suffered, encamped in winter among the snows, and in summer exposed to the scorching heats, had brought upon him a severe indisposition, which had like to have cost him his life. Petrarch never quitted his room during his illness; and when he began to recover, he was carried by his servants to Petrarch's house at St. Ambrose, and finding him in his library in the midst of his books, 'Here it is,' said he, 'that I delight to behold you.'

Galeas was fond of Pandolphe, and confided in his valor and skill; but the brutality of Barnabas obliged him to leave Milan. Galeas being attacked with the gout, ordered Pandolphe to review the cavalry: this displeased Barnabas, who sent for him immediately. Pandolphe, kneeling down to pay his homage, Barnabas struck him with the hilt of his sword, and would have killed him, but he avoided the stroke. Queen de Lascalle, who was present, told her husband, it was a base action to attempt the life of a gentleman in his own house. Barnabas had him put in irons, and command-

ed his head to be cut off. Galeas sent his wife, and two of his officers, to beseech a pardon for Pandolphe. Barnabas answered, that he would send him to his brother, for him to take revenge for his offence ; on which Galeas sent him back to his own country.

A rumour prevailed at this time, that the king of Hungary was coming into Italy against the Venetians, and that he had made a league with the emperor. The Viscomtis were extremely alarmed, and begged Petrarch to be their ambassador to the emperor, to justify their conduct, and to penetrate into his designs. ' They send me into the north,' says he, ' when I have most need of repose. Man is made for labor. I love the man who sends me, and shall be repaid for the fatigue, if I am so happy as to succeed in my negociation.' Petrarch went to Bastia, where he waited a month for the emperor. ' This prince finishes nothing,' says he : ' I must go seek him at the bottom of Barbary.' His departure was most fortunate, for the city of Bastia was destroyed a few days after by an earthquake, which overthrew at the same time more than fourscore castles on the banks of the Rhine. Petrarch describes this river in affliction, that ' its stream must now run over these ruins.' These commotions con-



tinued a great part of the year. Straßbourg, Treves, Spires, and all the towns on the Rhine, were more violently agitated than the rest: the inhabitants of these towns, not daring to continue in them, wandered about in the fields.

Petrarch arrived at Prague in July: he found the emperor employed about the famous golden bull which he had just bestowed on the princes of the empire at the diet of Nuremburg. This singular charter, which is at present the fundamental law of the empire, shews the turn of that age. It begins by an apostrophe to Satan, to Pride, to Luxury, Wrath, and Envy. The style by no means answered the dignity of the subject.

Petrarch made but a short stay at Prague, notwithstanding the kind reception and request of the emperor. This prince, though displeased with the Viscomtis, did not intend to make war against them. His affairs in Germany fully employed him, and the embellishment of the city of Prague. He had with him two prelates of distinguished merit, who possessed all his confidence, and went every where with him; Ernest de Pardowitz, archbishop of Prague, and John Ocsko, bishop of Olmutz. Petrarch formed a short union with them during his stay at Prague, and corresponded with

them afterwards. Ernest said to him sometimes, 'Friend, I am concerned to see you among barbarians.' 'Nothing was, however,' says Petrarch, 'less barbarous than these prelates, and the prince they served; they were as gentle, polite, and affable, as if they had been born at Athens.'

Petrarch returned to Milan in the beginning of September; he would not pass this critical month in a foreign climate; when he received from his friend Simonides the following letter:

'You are returned in health, my dear Petrarch, thanks be to God! This is the most agreeable news I could receive. Life would be nothing to me without you. I dreaded for you the intemperature of the air, and still more the barbarous manners of the country you was in, so different as they are from those of our beloved Italy. You inquired of me for a good housekeeper; I found just such a one as you wanted; a woman above forty years of age, neat, skilful, of good manners, and understanding in a kitchen. I have used every argument, but cannot persuade her to come to you. She says she will be a servant no longer, as she can live by her distaff.'

Some days after Petrarch's return, there ar-



rived a courier at Milan, who brought the news of the battle of Potiers, in which four-score thousand French were conquered by eight thousand English; and king John and his son made prisoners. Galeas Visconti, who loved France, and was attached to the family which governed there, wished to write to prince Charles the dauphin, and to the cardinal of Bologna, to express his grief; and he begged Petrarch to compose these letters. That to the prince is as follows:

‘Serene prince! If on one side grief forces from me lamentation, on the other, I am petrified and reduced to silence, when I reflect on the caprice of that blind goddess who governs the human race. If by a turn of her wheel she has overthrown your illustrious father, with his son your brother, who can hope to be saved from her strokes?’

‘I speak not of the losses all France has sustained in that fatal day, which obscured the sun of that great kingdom, and eclipsed the greatest part of the stars that enlightened it.

‘Great prince! Your affliction has reached me at this distance: God is my witness that I share it with you. Of what is not that insolent hand capable, who dares touch with fa-

crilegious hands the diadem of France? With all the princes of Europe I feel this sad event: but, besides this, I have a particular concern in it. Your majesty will not believe me capable of ever forgetting the marks of goodness I received from your grandfather, your father, and yourself. There was in your family a sort of contest who should be kindest to a man but little known to you. So many benefits are engraved on my heart in lines that time cannot efface, and that ingratitude shall never cover with her clouds! And can I then fail to deplore your calamity, or, under the weight with which you are charged at your age, endeavour to moderate your grief, and give you the consolation I should wish to receive in your place! Providence has given to your youth what he seldom grants to the old age of princes, to know the emptiness of all things human, and the perfidy of Fortune, whose power can only be resisted by a virtuous soul. You have received that soul from nature, and have perfected it by study and experience: on this is founded the public hopes and the safety of your kingdom. Heaven has spared you, to deliver and revenge your father, and to hold the reins of empire for him: if the weight is above your years, it is not beyond your courage. The af-



fairs with which you are overwhelmed will not permit me to intrude on your time. I conclude with offering to your service my person and possessions. Happy shall I be if I can afford any succour to your majesty, whom I pray Heaven to console, in granting freedom to your father, and victory over his enemies.'

The letter to the cardinal was in these words :

' Very reverend father and lord ! The horrible catastrophe of the king my master has made so deep an impression on me, I have hardly power to speak. If love does not blind me, all the human race ought to grieve for this disaster, and princes more than others ; but those who are attached like me will be inconsolable !

' I feel tenderly for the dauphin, but I hope every thing from his courage and virtues. With the Divine aid he shall deliver his father, and steer the helm of his abandoned kingdom. I thought it my duty, as it was my inclination, to express these sentiments to him, and to you, my lord, who, next to him, are the most sensibly concerned in this unhappy event. Vouchsafe to engage him to use with confidence what I have most freely offered. The Lord preserve and make you prosper.'

Petrarch could scarcely believe it possible that an invincible hero, the greatest of kings, should be vanquished by so inferior an enemy. The Viscomtis at this time had enemies on all sides, and their city was like a vessel buffeted by the tempest. 'For my part,' says Petrarch, 'I am tranquil in the midst of these storms; and if I did not hear the roaring of the waves, if I did not behold others in agitation, I should be ignorant that I was sailing on a tempestuous sea, and seated at the feet of the pilot. Firm, without being motionless, I wait without fearing: no wind is contrary to me; on every shore I find a safe asylum. If I dared compare myself to Cato, I should say I am in the state in which he was found by his nephew Brutus; uneasy for others, but careless about himself.' In fact, while the city of Milan was the theatre of war, Petrarch revised several of his Italian poems.

Soon after this he received a letter from Avignon, written by Socrates, Lelius, and Gui Settimo, together. They all inhabited the same house, and lived in the greatest union. Petrarch replies, 'I should never have believed I could have envied people who dwell in Babylon. Nevertheless, I wished to be with you in your house, shut up from the poisonous air of that



infamous city. I look upon your dwelling to be like the Elyfian fields in the middle of Aver-nus.' Some time after this he received a very singular letter from young Agapit Colonna, who had formerly been his pupil, but who had profited very little by his instructions. The letter was in a sharp unpolished style. He thanked him for the pains he had taken with his education; but adds, 'Fortune has elevated and overwhelmed you with benefits. Proud of your treasures, and the elegance of your houses, you despise a poor exile, fallen from his prosperous state, ill clothed, and worse provided for, leading a miserable life in a little house near Bologna. You fly from and think no more of me in this poor situation.'

Petrarch answered these reproaches in the following manner:

'I am neither rich nor poor. I have every thing that is necessary, and I desire nothing more. It is true that my income is somewhat increased, but my my expences are increased in proportion, and I lay nothing up at the end of the year. You say you are poor: I can scarcely believe that a person of your name and merit can be so. But was this the case, how could you ever think that poverty rendered you despicable in my eyes? This is very opposite to

my character. I despise no one, and have always had a singular regard for you. If I was capable of contempt, it would fall upon the rich rather than the poor: Not that riches are contemptible in themselves, but because they bring so many vices in their train.

‘Your letter has astonished me beyond expression: I cannot recover my surprise, and I look upon it as a dream. You cannot think all you wrote: you only meant to punish me for my neglect in writing to you. I will not justify myself in that particular: I am flattered in your chagrin on that account, and kiss the hand that wounds me. But you ought to attribute my silence to my idleness of disposition, well known to you, to my occupations, which increase every day, and to the difficulty of conveying my letters. I do not comprehend what you mean by the magnificence of my houses: I dwell in a retired corner of Milan: often a wanderer in the fields, I am ignorant of what passes in the city. Adieu! And if it is possible, be persuaded that, whether rich or poor, whether I write to you or keep silence, I shall always be sincerely attached to you.’

In the beginning of the year 1357 Petrarch received a diploma sent to him by the bishop of Olmutz, chancellor of the empire, by which



the emperor created him count palatine, with all the privileges of that dignity, which consisted in creating doctors and lawyers, legitimating the natural children of citizens, crowning poets, giving dispensations of age, &c. These counts were sometimes also stewards of the estates of the prince, and receivers-general of his finances. The emperor had added to this dignity some particular privileges, and very flattering encomiums.

Petrarch, in his letter of thanks, says, 'I am very grateful for the singular favor the emperor has vouchsafed me, and the obliging expressions with which you have heightened this grace. My expectations from his goodness and your friendship are more than satisfied; but I will not receive any gold: be not displeased that I return that on the bull by your friend who brought it to me.'

The diploma was enriched with a bull, or seal of gold, on one side of which was the figure of the emperor seated on his throne, with an eagle and a lion; on the other, the city of Rome, with its temples and walls.

Petrarch sustained a loss at this time, which he thus speaks of in a letter to Lelius: 'An old Milanese of fourscore, who called me his father, and came almost every day to dine with

me, has paid the tribute of nature. He was a man of condition, but little fortune; of a good character, and a lively disposition; though he was almost in his second childhood. His questions were so droll and uncommon, they would have moved a dead man to laughter. He disputed on philosophy and religion, and had an inexhaustible storehouse of arguments. He submitted to no one but myself, and that rather from friendship than conviction. He fatigued every one with his questions, especially the monks. He inquired of them, at first sight, Have you studied? If they said No, he shook his head, and went away without a word more: if they replied Yes, then he began his disputations, turned a question on all sides with an inexhaustible volubility, and violent peals of laughter. I asked him sometimes, with an air of surprise, from whence he obtained his knowledge, and where were all his books? "Here, here!" replied he, rubbing his forehead; "here is my library: it is from hence I draw my knowledge. Books were only invented to aid the memory, and are only the supports of its weakness." This odd assertion diverted us extremely. He said nothing but what he firmly believed, and his opinions were the joys of his life. He held in absolute contempt the rules



of grammar, spoke incorrectly, and disputed under the armour of ignorance. He undertook to write a book in your name: I wish he had lived to finish it; it would have been a notable and most singular production. Three days before his death, he came to seek me with a melancholy countenance. I asked him what concerned him. He answered, 'I am this day fourscore. How many years think you remain for me? Perhaps twenty-five years, or thereabouts?' "Go," said I to him, with a smile, "be easy, and you may very well reach thirty." "If so," replied he, "I am content; I desire no more." He went away, and I saw him no more. Three days after this they informed me he was brought to my church to be interred. He had no sickness, no other disease but old age. I regret his loss; he loved me, called me father; and his singularities amused me. Characters of this sort are necessary to divert me from more serious and interesting occupations. After having succoured his old age as much as I was able, I shed some tears on his tomb, which is in my church of St. Ambrose. This good old man loved and called you his son.'

Petrarch had for some time perceived in the letters of Lelius a sort of confusion and concern. At last he was informed that a quarrel

had happened between him and Socrates, after having lived twenty-eight years in the strictest friendship. It was occasioned by one of those busy malicious people who are the plagues of society. They told Lelius that Socrates spoke ill of him, and had even written unkind things of him to Petrarch. Lelius too easily believed so unlikely a report. Petrarch, on this occasion, wrote him a sharp letter, in which, after having justified Socrates, he conjured him to go to his friend immediately; for he was persuaded, with good reason, nothing more was necessary to reconcile such old friends. It is to be lamented this letter is not inserted, which might have served for a model to others in such situations. It had all the effect that was to be expected from such an interposition. Lelius could not read it without a deluge of tears. He went in a flood of grief to Socrates, fell upon his neck, and wept. Socrates embraced him in the tenderest manner. Those who were by could hardly stand this affecting reconciliation. Petrarch was full of joy when he was informed of it, and wrote to congratulate them both.

In the violent heats of this year Petrarch retired to a little village near the river Adda, three miles from Milan. 'The situation,' says he, 'is charming, and the air very pure. It is



on a little elevation in the middle of a plain, furrounded on all sides with fountains; not rapid and noisy, as those of Vacluse, but smooth and gentle in their motion. The course of these waters is so intermingled, that their beginnings or endings cannot be discovered. As if they would imitate the dance of the nymphs, they approach, retire, unite, and separate alternately in a most agreeable and singular manner. After forming a sort of labyrinth by these meanderings, they go all together, and empty themselves into the same reservoir.'

John Viscomti had chosen this situation to found a Carthusian monastery. Petrarch designed at first to lodge in it, and the Carthusians consented: but as he could not do without horses and attendants, he feared that the noise, and, above all, the drunkenness, of servants, would give trouble and distress in this holy retreat. He therefore hired a house in the neighbourhood, near enough to go there any hour of the day. He gave this house the name of Linterno, in memory of Scipio Africanus, whose country-house was so called; and in joke sometimes he called it the Inferno.

1358. While Petrarch was in this retirement, he received a letter from his friend Set-

timo, who desired he would inform him of all the occupations and projects of his son John. Petrarch wrote this answer :

‘ The train of my life has been uniform since the frozen hand of age has extinguished the ardour of youth, and that fatal passion which so long tormented me ! But what do I say ! It is the dew of heaven that has produced this blessed effect. Do we not every day behold, to the shame of humanity, old men plunged in debauchery ? What a horrid and dangerous spectacle for youth ! Like a weary traveller, I double my steps as I hasten to the end of my course. I read and write day and night : one is my refreshment after the other ; and my labours grow continually. Novelty pushes me on, obstacles increase my ardour. God, who knows my intentions, will assist me, if he sees it for the good of my soul. Labour is certain, success hazardous : I feel this in common with those who follow the same painful course of life. I wish posterity to know and approve me : if I do not succeed there, I shall be known in my own age, or at least by my friends. Nothing more is necessary. It would be even sufficient to know my own character, if it was such as it ought to be ; but with this, alas ! I cannot flatter myself. Whatever shall



be the success of my labours, I pray that God will not abandon me in old age, and, above all, at my death. My health is so good, my body so strong, that neither increase of years, serious occupations, abstinence, nor the strokes of grief, have been able to subdue this stubborn ass, on which I make continual war.

‘As to fortune, I possess that happy medium which is equally distant from both extremes; except in one point, that I am more sought after than I would be, or than suits with my repose. I am loved without being known or seen, and that is perhaps the reason of it. I have already passed an olympiad at Milan, a thing which neither myself nor my friends thought possible; so true it is, we ought never to say, here I will live, or there I will die; for we can be certain of nothing in this world. The kindness I have received at Milan, attaches me not only to its inhabitants, but to its houses, land, air, and even its walls; not to speak of my friends and acquaintance. I reside in a very retired corner of the city towards the west.

‘An ancient religious custom draws the people on Sundays to the church of St. Ambrose, who is my neighbour: the rest of the week this spot is a desert. Behold what this great saint does for his guest: he consoles me by his

presence ; he gives spiritual succour to my soul, and saves it from disgust. Under the shelter of his wings, I see the tempests, and hear the noise of the waves, but they come not near to trouble me. When I go out to pay my duty to my master, or for some other business, (which rarely happens,) I salute every one, on the right side and on the left, by a simple motion of my head, without stopping or speaking to any. My increase of fortune has made no alteration in my diet or sleep, which you know was always slender ; on the contrary, I retrench still, and shall soon have nothing more to diminish. I am only in bed while I sleep, except I am sick. It appears to me that sleep so strongly resembles death, and the bed our tomb, that the idea gives me a disgust to my bed, from which I rise the moment I awake, and go into my library. I generally do this in the middle of the night, except when the nights are at the shortest. I grant to Nature only what she commands imperiously, and which it is not possible to refuse her.

‘ I am always fond of solitude and silence ; but when I am with my friends, I am disposed to converse a great deal : this happens, perhaps, because I see them seldom : and I would compensate for the silence of a year by the prate



of a day; and when my friends depart, I become dumb again.

‘ Nothing is so fatiguing as to converse with many, or with one whom we do not love, and who is not conversant with the same subjects as ourselves. I resemble those people of whom Seneca speaks, who take life in detail rather than in the gross. I have taken a house a league from Milan, to shelter me from the heats, in a fine clear air, where I am still more at liberty than in the town. Here my table is abundantly supplied; the peasants are ambitious which shall bring me most fruits, fish, ducks, and all sorts of wild fowl. There is in my neighbourhood a fine monastery of the Carthusians, newly founded, where I can enjoy, at all hours of the day, the pure and delightful pleasures of religion. The gates are always open to me; a privilege few people possess: but we should take care not to give trouble to others in seeking our own convenience, and this prevented my lodging there. It appears to me, that it is here we most frequently fail in delicacy; and it is because we are more occupied with ourselves than solicitous for our fellow-creatures. In this happy retreat I wish for nothing but my old friends. I was rich in many such formerly, but death and absence

have diminished these possessions, and they are only to be regained in imagination. Your society, and that of Socrates, I long flattered myself with obtaining. If you persist in your rigour, I must draw all the consolation I can from my pious monks. Their conversation is neither bright nor wise, but it is innocent and holy. Their repasts are not inviting; but there is a perfect freedom in their company; and their prayers will be my great consolation both in life and at death.

‘Solomon has told us that riches draw parasites. I have never obtained so much of them as to experience this truth. The little gold I have passes through my fingers, and my coffer is rather a passage than dwelling-place for it. I know that it is made to solace the wants, and not to nourish the passions, of men. In this view it was originally fought from the mines, purified, struck, and stamped. He who expends it properly is its master; he who lays it up, its keeper; he who loves it, a fool; he who fears it, a slave; he who adores it, an idolater: the truly wise man is he who despises it. You wish to hear news of our young man; I don’t know what to say about him: his manners are gentle, and the blossoms of his youth promise fruit; of what sort it will be I cannot



yet guess; but I think I can flatter myself he will be an honest man. I know he has understanding: but of what use is understanding if not cultivated by study? He flies from a book as he would fly from the face of a serpent.

‘If his disposition pleases me, I see with grief that idleness will reduce it to nothing. Prayers, careffes, menaces, and pains, all have been tried by me without success: Nature has always surmounted my endeavours. I have nothing, however, to reproach myself with; and I will be satisfied if, as I hope, he turns out a good man. The glory that letters bestow, is, no doubt, greatly desirable; but it is difficult to acquire: it is more easy to live a life of virtue than a life of fame. We pardon a man if he is not wise, but we never forgive him if he is defective in goodness; and Themistocles said, he loved the man much better who was without letters, than letters without the man.’

This year the Viscomtis laid siege to Pavia. There was in this city a man of singular character, who was called James Boffalaro: his father was a trunk-maker. He early abandoned the world, to live in a desert the life of a hermit, and afterwards took the habit of the order of St. Augustine, and acquired great re-

putation for knowledge and piety: nothing was talked of at Pavia but the eloquence of brother James. Encouraged by these attentions, he declaimed with vehemence against usury, monopolies, and the ornaments of dress; and the effect of his preaching was a thorough reformation. Usurers were no more seen at Pavia; and even the ladies renounced their finery. After this he began to attack tyranny and tyrants, and exhorted the Pavians to establish a republican government. The people listened to him greedily, complied with all his regulations, and gave him sixty men for his guard; so that the lords of Beccaria, then governors of Pavia, did not dare to oppose him; and he became master, in fact, though without any change of his monastic life, and his commands were considered as blessings. ‘The sermons of a little monk,’ says Villani, ‘did all this.’

Petrarch wrote a letter to brother James, representing to him how ill war suited the habit of a monk; and that it was incumbent on him to promote peace, rather than sow the flames of discord: but it made no impression on him. When the Viscomtis laid siege to Pavia, the citizens were depressed by famine, and began to be discouraged. Brother James never ceased to animate them by his preachings, and with



a prophetic tone announced victory. One day their money failing, he spoke with so much force against luxury, that the ladies brought him their jewels and rich habits, and the men all the gold and silver they possessed. He got the former sold at Venice, and obtained a considerable sum for them, which served to support them for some time: but they were at last obliged to capitulate. Brother James treated with Galeas, who shewed him the utmost respect, and granted all his demands. After having concerted with him the necessary regulations, he brought him to Milan, where, as soon as he arrived, he delivered him up to the monks of his order, by whom brother James was shut up in a strong prison, with very little light, says Villani, and a great many wants; where, no doubt, he repented he had not followed the good advice of Petrarch.

The year 1358 was almost wholly employed by Petrarch in his treatise on the remedies of good and bad fortune. It is dedicated to his friend Azon de Correge, whose past life and present situation occasioned him to undertake this work. In his dedication he describes it as follows:

‘When I consider the instability of human affairs, and the variations of fortune, I find

nothing more uncertain or restless than the life of man. Nature has given to animals an excellent remedy under disasters, which is the ignorance of them. We seem better treated in intelligence, foresight, and memory. No doubt, these are admirable presents; but they often annoy more than they assist us. A prey to un-  
useful or distressing cares, we are tormented by the present, the past, and the future; and, as if we feared we should not be miserable enough, we join to the evil we suffer the remembrance of a former distress, and the apprehension of some future calamity. This is the Cerberus with three heads we combat without ceasing. Our life might be gay and happy if we would: but we eagerly seek subjects of affliction to render it irksome and melancholy. We pass the first years of this life in the shades of ignorance, the succeeding ones in pain and labour, the latter part in grief and remorse, and the whole in error: nor do we suffer ourselves to possess one bright day without a cloud.

‘Let us examine this matter with sincerity, and we shall agree that our distresses chiefly arise from ourselves. It is virtue alone which can render us superior to Fortune: we quit her standard, and the combat is no longer equal. Fortune mocks us; she turns us on her wheel;



she raises and abases us at her pleasure, but her power is founded on our weakness. This is an old rooted evil, but it is not incurable: there is nothing a firm and elevated mind cannot accomplish. The discourse of the wise, and the study of good books, are the best remedies I know of; but to these we must join the consent of the soul, without which the best advice will be useless. What gratitude do we not owe to those great men who, though dead many ages before us, live with us by their works, discourse with us, are our masters and guides, and serve us as pilots in the navigation of life, where our vessel is agitated without ceasing by the storms of our passions! It is here that true philosophy brings us to a safe port, by a sure and easy passage; not like that of the schools, which raising us on its airy and deceitful wings, and causing us to hover on the clouds of frivolous dispute, lets us fall without any light or instruction in the same place where she took us up.

‘ Dear friend, I do not attempt to exhort you to the study I judge so important. Nature has given you a taste for all knowledge, but fortune has denied you the leisure to acquire it: yet, whenever you could steal a moment from public affairs, you sought the conversa-

tion of wise men; and I have remarked that your memory often served you instead of books. It is therefore unnecessary to invite you to do what you have always done; but, as we cannot retain all we hear or read, it may be useful to furnish your mind with some maxims that may best serve to arm you against the assaults of misfortune. The vulgar, and even philosophers, have decided, that adverse fortune was most difficult to sustain. For my own part, I am of a different opinion, and believe it more easy to support adversity than prosperity; and that fortune is more treacherous and dangerous when she caresses than when she dismays. Experience has taught me this, not books or arguments. I have seen many persons sustain great losses, poverty, exile, tortures, death, and even disorders that were worse than death, with courage; but I have seen none whose heads have not been turned by power, riches, and honors. How often have we beheld those overthrown by good fortune who could never be shaken by bad! This made me wish to learn how to support a great fortune. You know the short time this work has taken; I have been less attentive to what might shine, than to what might be useful on this subject. Truth and virtue are the wealth of all men,



and shall I not discourse of these with my dear Azon? I would prepare for you, as in a little portable box, a friendly antidote against the poison of good and bad fortune. The one requires a rein to repress the sallies of a transported soul; the other a consolation, to fortify the overwhelmed and afflicted spirit.'

'Nature gave you, my friend, the heart of a king; but she gave you not a kingdom, of which therefore Fortune could not deprive you. But I doubt whether our age can furnish an example of worse or better treatment from her than yourself. In the first part of your life you was blest with an admirable constitution, and astonishing health and vigour: some years after we beheld you thrice abandoned by the physicians, who despaired of your life. The heavenly Physician, who was your sole resource, restored your health, but not your former strength. You were then called iron-footed, for your singular force and agility; you are now bent, and lean upon the shoulders of those whom you formerly supported. Your country beheld you one day its governor, the next an exile. Princes disputed for your friendship, and afterwards conspired your ruin. You lost by death the greatest part of your friends; the rest, according to custom, deserted you in cala-

mity. To these misfortunes was added a violent disease, which attacked you when you were destitute of all succours, at a distance from your country and family, in a strange land, invested by the troops of your enemies; so that those two or three friends whom Fortune had left you, could not come near to relieve you. In a word, you have experienced every hardship, but imprisonment and death. But what do I say? you have felt all the horrors of the former, when your faithful wife and children were shut up by your enemies; and even death followed you, and took one of those children, for whose loss you would willingly have sacrificed your own.

‘In you have been united the fortunes of Pompey and Marius: but you were neither arrogant in prosperity, as the one, nor discouraged in adversity, as the other. You have supported both in a manner that has made you loved by your friends, and admired by your enemies. There is a peculiar charm in the serene and tranquil air of virtue, which enlightens all around it, in the midst of the darkest scenes and the greatest calamities. My ancient friendship for you has caused me to quit every thing; to perform a work, in which, as in a glass, you may adjust and prepare your soul for all events;



and be able to say, as Æneas did to the Sybil, "Nothing of this is new to me; I have foreseen, and am prepared for it all." I am sensible that in the disorders of the mind, as well as those of the body, discourses are not thought the most efficacious remedies; but I am persuaded also, that the malady of the soul ought to be cured by spiritual applications. If we see a friend in distress, and give him all the consolation we are able, we perform the duties of friendship, which pays more attention to the disposition of the heart than the value of the gift. A small present may be the testimony of a great love. There is no good I do not wish you; and this is all I can offer toward it. I wish this little treatise may be of use to you. If it should not answer my hopes, I shall, however, be secure of pardon from your friendship. It presents you with the four great passions; Hope and Joy, the daughters of Prosperity; Fear and Grief, the offspring of Adversity; who attack the soul, and lance at it all their arrows. Reason commands in the citadel to repulse them: your penetration will easily perceive which side will obtain the victory.'

This treatise of Petrarch's made a great noise; the moment it appeared every one was eager to obtain it. It is full of genius, erudition,

and true philosophy, and enlivened by a thousand examples both from ancient and modern history. We must add, in justice to Petrarch, that the misfortunes of Azon de Correege never lessened his friendship for him to his death. The cause of his sufferings and exile is not very certain. Three of his servants were hanged; and he only saved his life by retiring to Ferrara; and at last went to Mantua, to live with the relations of his wife.

In June, 1358, a peace was concluded between the Gonzaguas, lords of Mantua, and the Viscomtis, to which Petrarch, by his influence, greatly contributed. One of the articles of it was, that Ugolin Gonzagua should espouse Catharine Viscomti, the daughter of Matthew Viscomti. The marriage was celebrated at Milan with great magnificence. At the same time Barnabas had a child baptised. The feasts on these occasions lasted several days, with games and tournaments, and all kinds of rejoicings.

Petrarch was a great part of the summer at Linterno. The Carthusians, with whom he spent much of his time, talked of nothing but the sanctity and virtues of their general. This was John Birel, whom the cardinals would



have made pope after the death of Clement, if the cardinal de Taillerand had not opposed it. Petrarch was pressed by these monks to write to John Birel, as the prior of the Carthusians at Milan was going to a general chapter held in the great monastery of that order. His letter is dated, 'From the monastery of the Carthusians at Milan, where I dwell.'

'Full of astonishment and admiration, I speak to you as I would speak to Jesus Christ himself, who, no doubt, dwells in your heart: for the heart of the just, is it not the temple of God? They say you are an angel, and that you lead the life an angel would do if he was on earth. For my part, I behold you as a star which rises from the monastery of the Carthusians to enlighten a sinful world, as we see the morning sun rise from the eastern mountain to illuminate the world. How happy are you! How miserable am I! While I am struggling with the tempestuous waves of time, in continual view of the death I dread, you are arrived safe in port, and, so to speak, entered into the porch of paradise, with the hope, or rather the assurance, of a blessed and endless life!'

After beseeching the blessing of his prayers

that God would inspire his mind with unfeigned charity, perfect piety, and holy religion, he finishes his letter thus :

‘ From whence can my confidence arise to a man I have never seen ? It is not my merit which gives it, but my love for you and your pious flock. It is the idea of your piety which makes me hope an easy access to your favor. We sometimes love those the best we do not personally behold. Sinner as I am, I see you in Jesus Christ, who views us all, and whom we behold in all things. I would, however, that my eyes also rejoiced in this sight ; and, though I daily hear of your pious words, that my ears could enjoy them from your own mouth. In fine, though I embrace you tenderly with my soul, I wish to enfold you in my arms, and kiss that hand I revere, that hand consecrated to God. I know you better than you imagine. Placed on a sacred elevation, your virtue makes you known of many with whom you are not acquainted. To this is joined that precious pledge I have confided to your care, that only brother enrolled in the militia of Jesus Christ, under the banners of your protection. Of all the gifts I have received from nature or fortune, none is so dear to me as he is. I know that you love him as your son.



You have taken him from me. I am consoled. I rejoice, nay, I glory, in a brother worthy to serve Jesus Christ in your holy family. This has inspired me with confidence towards you. The prior of the Carthusians at Milan, who will present you with my letter and my homage, will confirm my affectionate sentiments for you and your order.'

John Birel, in his answer to Petrarch, reprimands him severely for the praises he had given him; saying, that it was not right to praise any one to their face. He exhorts Petrarch to employ the great talents God had given him in works on morals and devotion; and, in particular, desired he would write a treatise on the dignity of human nature, which pope Innocent III. had promised to the world when he published his treatise on the misery of man.

Petrarch, after justifying himself for the praises he had bestowed by the examples of the greatest saints, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, &c. says, 'I could make you the same reproaches with much better foundation. I neither claim nor merit the praises you have bestowed on my genius. You desire me to make good the promises of others, who have not time to fulfil my own. Perhaps also it was a subject too difficult for the great pope, and

what then will it be for me? Innocent III. was one of the wisest men of his age, and did honor to the holy see. He knew that human misery was an extensive, and human felicity a short and delicate subject.

‘ I am engaged in a treatise on the remedies of good and bad fortune, in which I try to suppress or extirpate, if possible, the passions of the soul. I was in the chapter of grief and misery when I received your letter. I apprehend that the malady of the soul called grief, can only be cured by the subject of joy we are furnished with from the dignity of human nature. One would have imagined you knew what I was about when you wrote, and that you meant your letter as a spur: it is certain I am animated by it. The honor of your notice, and the pleasure of obeying your commands, shall inspire me with courage; and if I cannot treat the subject in particular as you desire, you will accept it as considered more generally in the treatise I have mentioned.’

The correspondence of Petrarch with John Birel was short. This general of the Carthusians died soon after with the highest reputation for his piety and good works.

Petrarch had an inflammation in his leg while he was at Linternò, occasioned by a large



volume of Cicero's epistles falling on it as he was reaching it down, and this happened more than once. 'I could not help,' says he, 'asking Cicero, with a smile, Why do you strike the man who loves you so much?' His leg was so bad through neglect, that advice was sent for, and the physicians thought it must be cut off; but by rest and fomentations he recovered. 'It is singular,' adds Petrarch, 'that from my childhood the accidents I have met with have always chosen this leg; which have made one of my servants call it pleasantly, The leg of ill fortune. In reality, these are motives to believe in fate; and why not, if by this word we understand providence?'

As soon as he recovered, Petrarch took a little journey to Bergamo, eight leagues from Milan. The occasion of it was this. There was in that city a goldsmith of excellent skill in his trade; he was born with a lively genius, and would have made a great progress in letters, if he had applied to them early; but he was somewhat advanced in life when this humour took hold of him. It soon absorbed his whole attention, and caused him to neglect his trade. Struck with the renown of Petrarch, he was determined, whatever it cost him, to become acquainted with so great a man, and

to merit his esteem. He tried several methods to introduce himself, and at last succeeded. 'It would have been barbarous,' says Petrarch, 'to have refused him what cost me so little, and delighted him so much.' The favorable reception that Petrarch gave him quite turned his head: his joy was expressed in his countenance, gait, and gestures. He spent a great part of his fortune in having the name and arms of Petrarch either chased, carved, or inlaid, upon every thing in his house; and, at a great expence, he got all his writings copied: for Petrarch had given to his ardent entreaties what he had denied the greatest princes. By degrees he entirely changed his character and manner of life, and abandoned his trade, which was a very profitable one.

Petrarch repeatedly told him it was too late to devote himself to study, and that he ought on no account to quit his business. Obedient to his advice on every other subject, and listening to him as an oracle, he would not be persuaded in this matter to alter his resolution, but shut up his shop, and spent all his time in the schools of the professors, in which that city abounded.

He was passionately desirous that Petrarch should visit him at Bergamo. 'One day only,'



said he, 'would he honor my house with his presence, it would be my glory and felicity for ages.' Petrarch kept him in suspense for some years; but at last, moved with his earnest supplications, and the pleasure he felt in bestowing happiness, he went to Bergamo; though some of his friends were against it, and thought it would be demeaning himself. The jeweller, whose name was Henry Copra, came to fetch him; and, that he might be amused upon the road, he brought with him some men of genius, whose conversation might be agreeable to him. Some of Petrarch's friends followed, curious to observe the event of this singular visit. When they came to Bergamo, the governor, commanding officer, and principal people of the city, came out to meet Petrarch, and rendered him the greatest honors. They would have lodged him in the city hotel, or some palace. The goldsmith was terrified lest he should not be preferred. But he was unjust to Petrarch, who was faithful to his promise, and went, with the friends who followed him, to his house. He had made vast preparations: the house was magnificently decorated, the chamber destined to Petrarch hung with purple, the bed gilt, and the banquet was a royal one. His library was more like a scholar's devoted

to letters, than a tradesman's, who had spent his life in a shop.

Petrarch went away the next day, fatiated with honors and good things. Never was a host so delighted with his guest: his joy was so immoderate, that his relations feared he would fall sick, or turn fool. The governor, and a great train, accompanied Petrarch much further than he desired. The goldsmith would not quit him, and they were obliged at last to force him away.

Petrarch arrived that night at Linterno, where he passed the rest of the autumn of 1358. He had a letter from Lelius, in which he informs him that the office of apostolic secretary was conferred on Zanobi de Strata, but had been solicited for him by his friends. Petrarch, after repeating what he had so often said on this subject, adds,

‘It gives me pleasure Zanobi has this employment: I love and am sure of being beloved by him. Among so many enemies of God and man, we shall at least have one friend in that court. But I lament the loss of the Muses, and I pity his fate. In accepting this office, he has had more regard to riches than reputation, life, or repose. It was not long



ago he joked me in a friendly manner for choosing a turbulent and noisy city for my Helicon. He was ignorant of the free, retired, and tranquil life I lead at Milan. He disapproved also of my situation in Provence, supposing it impossible for any one to be happy on that side the Alps. Nevertheless, at Vacluse, if, respecting my body and my errors, I led the life of a man, with respect to the peace of my mind, I led the life of an angel. When Zanobi talked in this manner, he did not foresee he should soon be an exile from Italy, and an inhabitant of the Babylonian Parnassus. If I know him, he will often regret his country, and the leisure he enjoyed at Naples, and will envy the freedom I possess at Milan. He will be richer, no doubt; but he will be less happy.'

1359. It was the most severe weather when Petrarch wrote this letter; his ink was frozen, his hand benumbed. It snowed violently: so great a quantity had never been seen between the Alps and the Appennine. Many villages and houses in the country suffered extremely. At Bologna the snow lay sixty feet deep; and they made a vault under it, where the young people had feasts and diversions. Villani, and

other historians, speak of this snow, which fell in February, as exceeding what had been known in the memory of man.

Petrarch's son was at this time at Avignon. Simonides, who was there also, after speaking of their common friends, Lelius, Socrates, &c. with all the warmth of friendship, talks to him of his son, whom he calls John Petrarch. 'He hardly ever leaves me me,' says he. 'He amuses me by his conversation, and teaches me many things. I find him gentle and modest; a good sign in a young man, if we may believe Seneca. I conjure you not to give ear too lightly to what may be said against him: Either I am much deceived, or you will see him one day almost such as you wish him to be.' We are not told why Petrarch's son went to reside at Avignon, or what he had done to incur his father's displeasure.

Petrarch had a visit this year from his friend Boccace. United by the same genius and disposition, they wrote often, and had a tender regard for each other. They had been but little together before, and this reunion confirmed their friendship. Boccace called Petrarch his master, and expressed great obligations to him for the knowledge he had communicated to him. His character had been



dissipated and libertine; and he confesses that to Petrarch he owed the conversion of his heart. His Decameron, which he wrote in 1348, is a proof of the freedom of his sentiments in the early part of his life. He was about forty-five years old when he came to Milan. Petrarch convinced him it was shameful at his age to lose his time among women; that he ought to employ himself in more serious pursuits, and turn his solicitude towards Heaven, instead of fixing it upon the earth. His eclogues, like those of Petrarch, are obscure and enigmatical.

After passing some days at Milan, his affairs obliged him to return to Florence in the beginning of April. The weather was stormy, and the waters out. Petrarch begged he would write to him as soon as he had passed the Po, and the other rivers, which he did.

Petrarch writing to Simonides, speaks thus of this visit:

‘ We have passed our days delightfully, but they slid too fast away. We only wanted you to complete our society. I could not be easy at my friend’s setting out in such bad weather, till I learned he had passed safely the king of rivers: he has only after this to cross the Appennine, that father of the mountains. This

friend knows all my thoughts, and will give you a faithful account of my transactions.'

Simonides answered Petrarch from Florence: 'Be at peace; our dear Boccace has passed the king of rivers and the father of mountains, and is arrived here safe and in good health.'

Soon after his arrival at Florence, Boccace sent Petrarch a fine copy of Dante's poem, which he had taken the pains to copy; and he apologises for the praises he gives him, by saying he was his first master, the first light which illuminated his mind. It was generally thought Petrarch was jealous of Dante, because he had no copy of his works. Petrarch was concerned that Boccace should adopt this opinion, and wrote to him as follows:

'The praises you have given to Dante are well founded, worthy both of him and you; and much more flattering than those applauses of the vulgar, which disturb the peace of his manes.

'If we owe much to the fathers of our body, how much more are we indebted to those who have formed our mind! I unite with you in praising this great poet, whose style is vulgar, but whose sentiments are noble and beautiful. I am only displeased that you know me so



little, by whom I wish to be perfectly known : of all the plagues of the soul, I am the least assaulted by envy. My father was strictly united with Dante, and the same ill fortune pursued them both. Neither injustice, exile, nor poverty, neither the love of his wife or children, could take this poet from his studies, though they required silence and repose : for this I can never enough admire him. I see many reasons for loving, but none for hating or despising him. His genius, sentiment, and humour, excellent in their kind, place him very far above contempt. I feared when young to read writers in the same language, lest by hazard I should copy their sentiments or manner. I have always avoided with care every kind of imitation ; and if it has happened, it has been by accident : this was the reason I did not read Dante then, though I admire him sincerely now ; and was I envious, it must be of the living ; for death is the tomb of envy as well as of hatred. All that I can be reproached for is, that I have said, he succeeded best in the vulgar tongue, both in verse and prose : that he rises higher, and pleases most, in this, you will agree with me ; and what author is there who has succeeded equally in every style ? This was not even granted to Cicero, Virgil,

Sallust, or Plato, when eloquence, now dead, was at its height. It is sufficient for a man to excel in one species of writing. I had this upon my mind, and I am consoled now that I have expressed it to you.'

In May, 1359, Petrarch received a letter from the empress Ann, to inform him of the birth of a daughter, and the joy this event had given her. She had been married five years without any children.

Petrarch, in his answer, expresses his gratitude for the great honor she had done him; and enumerates the illustrious women whose virtues, courage, and great actions, have given them such just renown.

Petrarch being informed his friend the bishop of Cavaillon was returned from Germany to his diocese, after he had been in quality of nuncio to the pope, wrote to congratulate him on his arrival; and says, 'I dread more than death those long and dangerous journies you take so often; it is time for you to repose yourself. I cannot express the ardent desire I have to behold you again; it is now seven years that we have been separated. I was in my youth absorbed in love; in age I am wrapped up in my friends; chilled in one period, and warmed in the other. I resign what



I once adored, and I adore those I then only loved. At the moment when you least think of it, you will perhaps see me in your library. On the banks of my river, or in my cave, I wait for my Socrates, or rather your Socrates. Love him, treat him as your dear child, as you have always treated me, and never forget your servant.'

Some malicious people persecuted Socrates. Petrarch wrote to encourage him, and invite him to Milan. 'I know,' says he, 'you wish to see me. Never have we been so long separated. Nothing, indeed, can divide souls united by virtue and the faith of Jesus Christ. But, after all, there is nothing like the presence of a beloved friend. Come; you are expected and longed for. You will find friends unknown to you, and a reputation. Your society will increase, and not diminish. Come, the way is short; let nothing stop you. Either you must fix with me, or I must come to you. Your journey will not be unuseful: you will see me; you will see Italy. The Alps, which separate you at present from your friend, will serve you as a barrier against those envious serpents who pursue your peace.'

Socrates did not accept this invitation. He loved Petrarch above all men. He detested

Avignon, and wished to see Italy; but he could not resolve to quit France, and run the hazard of ending his days in a foreign country.

When Petrarch returned from Linterno, he met with an accident in his house at Milan, which distressed him very much. When he arose one morning, he found he had been robbed of all but his books. As he perceived it was a domestic robbery, he could suspect none but his son John, who was returned from Avignon, and his servants. He was become extremely libertine; and it was the necessities his debauched life reduced him to that had brought him to this action. He fought every day with his father's servants; and Petrarch could not keep either him or them within any bounds; so that he lost all patience, and turned them all out of his house. His son begged to be received again; but Petrarch would not for some time consent to it. This event had occasioned him to quit his retired house at St. Ambrose, in which he did not think himself in safety; and he took a small mansion in the middle of the city, where he remained but a short time. His love of solitude and repose soon induced him to seek a more retired habitation; and he found one in the monastery of St. Simplicien, situated out of the



walls. 'I have here,' says he, 'a long covered walk, separated from the fields by a narrow woody path, from whence I can go round the city without meeting any one: for such is the solitude of this place, that you seem to be in the middle of a wood, if the view of the city in some parts, and the noise we sometimes hear, did not remind us we are near it.'

Petrarch asked one of the monks for a life of St. Simplicien. 'He brought me a book,' says he, 'which the author had compiled from the Confessions of St. Augustine, but in a very flat and injudicious manner. I threw it aside in anger; but it brought to my mind a good saying, "The glory of saints depends not upon the eloquence of biographers. Those saints want not the pen of mortals who are written in the book of life." But, if we suppose a good writer capable of the work, who wishes to animate the living rather than honor the dead, where will he meet with facts, if we find none in the house of the saint himself? It is only from the testimony of St. Augustine we learn that Simplicien was all his life a faithful servant of God, well versed in the duties of an evangelical life; that he contributed to his conversion, and was chosen to succeed St. Ambrose by the direction of that great saint,

This is all I could discover of my sacred host. God knows the rest.'

A physician, called Albin de Canobio, who was fond of Petrarch, wrote to invite him to his country house at the foot of the Alps. The air of Milan was become infectious. 'Come hither,' says Albin; 'the air is very good, and you will have always near you a physician and a friend.' Petrarch replied, 'It becomes not one of my age to fly from death: it is needless so to do, because it comes every where. I would sooner visit you as my friend than my physician. The art of physic may be useful to preserve health, and cure lesser disorders, but in violent diseases it is of little use. We see physicians themselves despair, and run away, which proves the ignorance or the weakness of men.'

Gui Settimo was appointed this year, 1359, to the archbishopric of Genoa. As he was extremely beloved, it caused great joy in Genoa. Petrarch wrote to congratulate him. 'I know not,' said he, 'whether I should rejoice or grieve for your exaltation: you will have more honor and revenue, but you will lose that freedom you are so fond of. But why do I say this? You did not enjoy liberty; you was the servant of the public; you are now the



servant of God : your condition is to be rejoiced in.'

He was scarcely settled in this new dignity, which brought him back with such honor to his country, when he was attacked with violent fits of the gout, and begged Petrarch to write him some consolations against pain, assuring him that he suffered with patience. Petrarch answered him with his usual spirit and philosophy, and then adds: 'I would have sent you my remedies of good and bad fortune, but I have no person at present who can copy it. The young man whom we have both taken so much pains with, that he might be the honor, relief, and joy of my old age, overwhelms me with shame and grief. This is contrary to my former predictions. Alas! they must be now effaced: he is the slave of his passions; envious, and disobedient: he hates knowledge and virtue. But we must suffer all things with patience. Augustus, esteemed the happiest of men, did not he lament the giving birth to three poisons? I, that have but one, should do wrong to complain.'

This son of Petrarch did every thing he could to obtain his father's forgiveness, and to be received into his house: he acknowledged his faults, and promised to correct them. Pe-

trarch wrote him a very sharp letter, in which he refuses to receive him then, but that he should be ready to do it when he gave proofs of his reformation. In effect, he permitted him soon after this to return home, and appears as much rejoiced as his son at this re-union.

In 1360, Galeas Visconti removed from Milan to Pavia; the cruelties of his brother had rendered his society insupportable. He embellished his new city, and rendered it a very agreeable and magnificent situation. Petrarch often passed a part of the summer with him there. He built a citadel of astonishing size, and at an immense expence; a covered bridge over the Tesin, ornamented with marble, which is still the favorite walk of the Pavians; and he made a fine park, which was twenty miles in circumference, and stored it with deer and game of all sorts. He established an university for all the sciences, engaged able professors, and ordered all his subjects to send their children to study there. All that he did was great; and Petrarch says of him, referring to the citadel of Pavia, ‘Galeas surpassed other men in most things, but in the magnificence of his buildings he surpassed himself.’

This year, Nicholas Acciajoli, who had been



for some time at the court of Avignon, where he was on a public business from the king of Hungary, was sent by the pope to Milan, to negotiate a peace with Barnabas, who had invaded Bologna. The grand senechal was extremely desirous to see Petrarch, who gives this account of their interview to Zanobi: 'Your Mæcenæ is come to treat with my Augustus, and has been twice to see me: neither the number of visits, the multitude of affairs, nor the distance, could prevent him. This great man came to my remote dwelling, and entered into my little house, as Pompey entered into that of the philosopher Possidonius; the fasces downward, the head uncovered, bowing with respect. What could an inhabitant of Parnassus do more, was he to enter into the temple of Apollo and the Muses? This generous humility moved me, and some persons of distinction who followed him, almost to tears; such was the majesty of his air, the softness of his manners, the dignity of his language; preceded by a silence more expressive than words! We conversed upon all subjects, and spoke of you in particular. He examined my books with condescension, staid a long time, and went away with concern. He has honored my dwelling so much, that not only Romans and

Florentines, but every lover of the sciences, pays homage to it. His presence, his noble countenance, has spread joy and peace in this royal city. He has completed the favor he always expressed for me, and his presence has raised rather than diminished the idea I had of him. How happy are you to have such a friend! Adieu! Do not forget me.'

The dispute about Bologna, between the pope and Barnabas Visconti, was more violent than ever, and a proceeding was commenced against the latter. Galeas was not to be included in it, on condition he should not aid his brother. Galeas consented, having in view an alliance with France, and being very unwilling to break with the pope.

King John was still a prisoner at London: the truce was expired between the French and English. Edward entered France with a powerful army, persuaded that nothing could resist him, and that before the end of the campaign he should become master of that kingdom. He laid siege to Rheims; but was obliged to raise it, and approached Paris, where he sent to defy the regent to battle, and ravaged the country around it: but his army being straitened for provision, he removed towards Chartres. On a sudden there arose so terrible a storm, accom-



panied with thunder and hail-stones of such a prodigious size, that it crushed to death both men and horses ; and so violent a rain deluged the camp, that a thousand soldiers and six thousand horses were buried in it. The violence of the winds, and the rapidity of the torrents, carried all before them. The English historian says, that the troops looked upon this storm as a mark of God's wrath, and that the king himself was of this opinion. It is affirmed that he turned towards the church of Chartres, and made a vow to consent to peace, which was concluded some time after. One of the articles of it was, that king John should pay three millions of gold crowns for his ransom ; six hundred thousand at Calais, four months after his arrival ; and four hundred thousand every year till all should be paid. The performance of this agreement was very difficult. France was desolated, and without resources. Money did not circulate : those who had any concealed it : all sorts of means were employed to bring it forth. The good citizens taxed themselves ; the financiers and Jews were laid under contribution ; and the pope granted two tenths from the clergy. Philip de Comines speaks of leather money being used at this time, with a nail of silver in the middle.

Galeas Viscomti took advantage of John's embarrassing situation, to demand his daughter Isabella for John Galeas his son. Historians assure us this honor cost him dear. Villani says, the king sold his daughter for six hundred thousand florins; and makes a singular reflection on this subject. 'When we consider the grandeur of France, who would have imagined that, by the attacks of a king of England, a petty monarch in comparison, its king should be reduced to sell his own flesh as at a public auction!'

Isabella was twelve years old, and John Galeas not eleven, but of ripe understanding for that age. When he was but five years old, being in his father's court, in the midst of the great persons assembled, he was observed to examine their faces and appearance very attentively. His father asked him which he thought the wisest person there: after looking again at every one of them, he went to Petrarch, took him by the hand, and brought him to his father.

Isabella made her entrance into Milan the 8th of October, 1360, attended by the count of Savoy. She was dressed in Royal habits, received all the honors paid to queens, and had a royal court; at which no ladies appeared be-



fore her with any covering on their heads. This ceremony lasted till the celebration of the marriage, when, setting this royalty aside, she did homage to the Viscomtis and their wives. The marriage was celebrated with the greatest magnificence: the Viscomtis invited all the lords of Italy, who came to it with all readiness, and brought their wives along with them. The rejoicings lasted three days, and were concluded by a sumptuous feast given by Barnabas. Six hundred ladies, and more than a thousand lords, were served at tables of three courses with the greatest elegance and profusion. There were every day tournaments, where they prepared booths for the ladies, whose fine dresses, with the pompous ornaments of the knights, and the vast concourse of princes, nobles, and people of all nations, formed all together a most superb spectacle.

Petrarch set out for Paris when these rejoicings were over, as ambaffador from Galeas Viscomti, to compliment king John on his return to, and on the recovery of, his kingdom. Petrarch gives this account of the dreadful condition of France:

‘When I viewed this kingdom, which had been desolated by fire and sword, I could not persuade myself it was the same I had formerly

beheld fertile, rich, and flourishing. On every side it now appeared a dreadful desert ; extreme poverty, lands untilled, fields laid waste, houses gone to ruin ; except here and there one that was defended by some fortification, or which was enclosed within the walls : every where were seen the traces of the English, and the dreadful havoc they had made. Touched by such mournful effects of the rage of man, I could not withhold my tears.

‘ I am not among those whose love of their own country causes them to hate or despise all the rest of the world. As I approached Paris, it appeared with that melancholy, disfigured air, as if it still dreaded the horrors it had been a prey to : and the Seine, which bathes its walls, wept over its late miseries, and shrunk at the idea of new disasters. Where, said I, is Paris now ? Where are its riches, its public joy, its crowds of scholars’ disputing even in the streets ? To the buz of their syllogisms has succeeded the din of arms, troops of guards, and machines of war : in the stead of libraries, we behold nothing but arsenals : and Tranquillity, who formerly reigned here as in her own temple, is now banished and fled from this unhappy land. The streets are deserted ; the



highways covered with weeds and brambles : the whole is one vast desert.'

Preparations were making at this time for the re-entrance of king John into his kingdom. He came first to Calais, and from thence set out for Paris. Petrarch relates a circumstance of this journey not in other historians. 'The king and his son,' says he, 'in traversing Picardy, were stopped by those troops of banditti who were foldiers of all nations united under several chiefs, and called companies, who ravaged the whole kingdom; and they were obliged to make a treaty with them to continue their journey in safety.' The king made his entrance into Paris in December, 1360. Villani says he was received with great honors, and that the city presented him with a thousand marks in silver plate.

The streets were carpeted, and the king walked under a canopy of cloth of gold. He went immediately to the church of Notre Dame, to return thanks to God, where, ever since the battle of Potiers, a wax light was kept burning night and day before the altar of the Virgin. They said it was rolled round a wheel, and in length would have comprehended the city of Paris.

Petrarch having witnessed the joy of the Parisians, went to compliment the king on his deliverance, in the name of the lords of Milan. John, who knew his reputation, and had heard him much spoken of by the cardinal of Bologna, was happy to see him, and gave him a very distinguished reception. This prince, though brought up by his father in ignorance, loved letters and wise men; but his son, Charles, to whom he had given for his preceptor the most learned man in his kingdom, was a prince of great genius and fine taste. Petrarch was astonished to find in him a mind so highly cultivated: he admired his perfect politeness of manners, and the wisdom and moderation with which he conversed on the most important subjects. He only says of king John, that he was brave and humane.

Most of Petrarch's friends, whom he had gained at Paris in 1333, were dead; but he had the happiness to find Peter le Berchier still alive, the wife Benedictine he had known at Avignon, and who visited him at Vacluse. This monk was prior of St. Elay, and, as he held a distinguished rank among men of letters, he rendered Petrarch's residence at Paris very agreeable to him. In a discourse which the



latter held with the king and the dauphin, he said it was not to be wondered at that Fortune, who diverts herself with all things human, should reduce a flourishing kingdom, formerly the object of envy, to so miserable a condition. The king and the dauphin fixed their eyes upon him with surprise, when they heard him speak of Fortune as a real being. The dauphin, who had a lively imagination, was curious to know what Petrarch thought of Fortune; and he said to Peter le Berchier, and some other persons there, 'Petrarch and his colleagues are to dine here to-day; we must attack him after dinner, and get him to explain himself on the subject of Fortune.' One of his friends warned him of the dauphin's intention. Petrarch had no books with him; but he collected his thoughts, and proposed to represent Fortune as a being of reason, and not a divinity who governed the world at pleasure, which was the common opinion of this age.

After dinner, the king was so occupied with doing the honors of his court to the ambassadors from Milan, that, to the great regret of the dauphin, he was prevented from discoursing with Petrarch. When the court broke up, Peter le Berchier, and three other learned men

not named by Petrarch, went home with him, and entered upon a conversation which lasted till vespers.

In the beginning of February, 1361, Petrarch, in haste to return to Italy, went to take leave of the king and the dauphin. They expressed extreme regret at his departure, and made some attempts to retain him at their court. The dauphin pressed it in particular, and wished ardently to have a man of Petrarch's merit near him. But neither their arguments nor offers had any effect: he loved his country too well; and the court of France was too illiterate for him. King John, though he loved letters, had hardly twenty books in his library; his reign, and that of his son, was the period of their revival in France. Peter le Berchier was engaged to translate Livy: this work was much admired, though never printed: there is a copy of it, with very pretty drawings in water colours, in the library of the Sorbonne. Jane, duchess of Burgundy, the niece of the cardinal of Bologna, who was second wife to Philip de Valois, concurred with John in the translation of several works. This princess, who had as much wit as beauty, died this year: if she had lived longer, she would have done much towards the revival of letters. Jane of Bour-



bon, wife of Charles V. followed her steps: it was she who engaged Philip de Vitry, the friend of Petrarch, to translate into French verse the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.

Peter le Berchier's best work was his translation of Livy, in which it seems probable he was assisted by Petrarch. He composed another work, called a *Moral Reducory*, a sort of Encyclopedia, where, in the taste of his age, every thing is allegorically represented, and ends with a moral. One passage may serve for an idea of it. He says, that 'at Orange the frogs never croak, except one; and the reason of this is, St. Florent, bishop of that city, fatigued with the noise of these animals, commanded them to be silent; but afterwards, touched with compassion, he allowed them all to croak again. The clerk, who was to carry this permission to the frogs, gave it in the singular instead of the plural, and so but one poor frog was ever heard in that city.' I have mentioned the romance of the *Rose*, a famous work of this age, in the same style. There was also a history of the three Marys, full of absurd fables. An Abbe published, in three dreams, the pilgrimage of human life, the pilgrimage of the soul when separated from the body, and the pilgrimage of Jesus Christ.

From this view of letters in France, we cannot be surpris'd at Petrarch's refusing to stay in it. He quitted the dauphin, however, with regret, and presented him with his treatise on good and bad fortune, which the prince had immediately translated by his preceptor; and this book held a distinguished rank in his library, which was said to contain nine hundred volumes; a prodigious number at a time when books were so scarce.

1361. Petrarch set out for Milan at the end of February. In the bad inns he met with it was his custom to write to his friends; and, recollecting the conversations he had had with Peter le Berchier, he wrote him the following letter:

' In my youth, the inhabitants of Great Britain, whom they call English, were the most cowardly of all the barbarians, inferior even to the vile Scotch. On the contrary, the French militia was then in the most flourishing state. At present the English, become a warlike people, have subdued the French by frequent and unlooked-for successes. Would you know in two words the cause of this change? Listen to Sallust. He says, ' Fortune changes with manners, and empire goes from the wicked to the good: strength, genius, vir-



tue, renown, circulate like money, and pass from one people to another.'

Petrarch then, describing the luxury of the French, gives this picture of their militia :

'When you enter into the camp, you would believe yourself in a tavern. They are even delicate, and will be drunk with foreign wines: and when there are none, they complain that the army wants for every thing, that they are dying with drought, and it is no wonder that the soldiers desert.' The military emulation has passed from arms to glasses: it is no longer the question with what weapons they shall fight, but with what glasses they shall drink: those who can take off the largest draughts, and bear the most wine, are victors, and gain the laurel crown. Seneca predicted this: "There shall come a day," says he, "when drunkenness shall be honorable, and it will be esteemed a virtue to excel in it." Thus they abide in their tents, eating, drinking, playing, snoring, and swearing, and plunged in debauchery with the women who follow the camp. If called out to fight, they know no chief, obey no command, but run here and there without order, like bees that have lost their hive, fawning, cowardly, ignorant, and boasting. When called upon to attack the foe,

they do nothing for glory, or from valor, but are wholly swayed by interest, vanity, and the love of pleasure.'

Petrarch adds to this an account of the severity of discipline among the Romans, and that from the time it began to relax they may date their overthrow.

Some months after writing this letter, he sent it by a monk who was going to France, having had no opportunity before, who found Peter le Berchier just dead in his priory at Elay.

This year the empress Ann was delivered of a son. The joy of the emperor was so great, that, instead of the avarice generally imputed to his character, he distributed gold by handfuls, and made presents to all the world. He sent sixteen marks of gold to Aix-la-Chapelle, which was the weight of the child, to put him under the protection of the holy Virgin, patroness of the church which Charlemagne had built in that city. He loved Petrarch too well to forget him on this occasion. He sent him a golden cup of admirable workmanship, and a very affectionate letter with it, pressing him to come and live in his court. Petrarch replies to these great favors,



‘ Your letter is conceived in terms too condescending for your rank, and too high for my condition. The cup, valuable in itself, and still more so for its high workmanship, is a present worthy of you, but unmerited by me. Who will not be astonished to see transferred to my use a vase consecrated by the mouth of Cæsar? But I shall take care not to profane this sacred cup by applying it to my own use. I would destine it to make libations on altars, if this ancient rite was still observed among us. It will be the delight and ornament of my table on solemn days; and when I give feasts, my friends shall behold it with pleasure. I shall preserve it all my life with your letter, as a monument of your goodness and of my glory. You propose a very agreeable journey to me, but I cannot quit Italy without the consent of the master under whose law I live: but my greatest obstacle is my library, which, without being immense, is much above my genius and knowledge: how will my books be able to traverse the Alps, infested as they are by thieves? The longer I live, the more I feel the truth of that saying, “ All is trouble and vexation of spirit :” He who doubts it, has only to live to a certain terms of years, and he will be perfectly convin-

ced of its truth. Nevertheless, I design to obey your orders before the summer is over, if my master permits, and I find a companion for my journey; and I will remain what time you please in your court. The presence of my Cæsar will console me for the absence of my books, my friends, and my country.'

This letter of Petrarch is dated from Padua, where he was now fixed. Probably this removal was owing to the plague, which ravaged the Milanese; and to the inroads of troops of robbers, called the companies, many of whom were disbanded troops not paid, who had pillaged France, and were now come into the provinces of Italy under several different chiefs, some of whom were in league with the great men in power, who, either from fear or interest, connived at these disorders. Petrarch laments the distresses they occasioned in a very pathetic manner. It is easy to imagine what desolation must rise from villains familiar with blood, and bound by no law, either human or divine. A Milanese historian says, 'They ravaged the lands, killed the men, forced the women before the eyes of their husbands, violated the daughters in the presence of their parents, and reduced all around them to ashes.'



What was Petrarch's grief to behold all these distresses in his dear country! 'I speak,' says he, 'because I cannot keep silence: It is some consolation to my heart to vent its sorrows, though I know I speak in vain. Yet who can tell? Though my words are cast into the air, some favorable wind may convey them to a beneficent ear, where they may become fruitful. Alas! I desire more than I hope this; for there remains nothing now to hope. Great God! thy regards formerly rendered us the most envied of mortals, the most illustrious of men! A handful of Romans went every where displaying their victorious standards; to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south: there subduing pride, here confining ambition; reprimanding voluptuousness in one land, and leaving the most glorious traces of their footsteps in all. The whole world acknowledged Rome as its chief, and fell prostrate before her. Now a troop of banditti, rushing from a thousand different retreats, spreads devastation over this queen of provinces, this mistress of the world!

'All-powerful God! thou art the last and the greatest hope of man. Thou hast created, and thou governest, the world by thy power.

If we have not answered thy goodness, punish and disgrace us. If prosperity has rendered us proud, let thy arm make us humble; but suffer us not to be a prey to those wretches, and our yoke their portion. Good Lord! oppose thy supreme defence to the torrent of their wickedness and cruelty; confound that impious people who say in their heart, "There is no God." Assist thy children, who are indeed unworthy, but who invoke thy aid with tears, and trust in God alone.'

1362. The occasion of their leaving France for Italy, was not only the pope's money, and the solicitations of the marquis de Montferrat, but also the plague, which was returned with such violence to the city of Avignon, that, between the 29th of March and the 25th of July there perished seventeen thousand persons, among whom were nine cardinals, an hundred bishops, and a great number of officers belonging to the Roman court. It came after the famine which the city of Avignon suffered from the invasion of the Companies.

Historians remark, that more persons of condition perished in this plague than in that of 1348: but it was not so general, nor of such long continuance. It was brought into Italy by the Companies. The city of Milan, which



the former plague had respected, was worse treated by this than any other. Villani says, there died in it every day a thousand, twelve hundred, and some days fourteen hundred people. All the great lords abandoned it. Galeas Visconti went to Monza. Barnabas shut himself up in his fine castle at Marignan, a place surrounded with woods, in a very pure air, and which he had carefully guarded: that no one might come near it, he placed a centinel in the bell-tower, who had orders to ring when any one should appear on horseback. Some Milanese gentlemen having entered Marignan, and the bell not sounding, Barnabas sent soldiers in a violent rage, with orders to throw the centinel immediately from the top of the tower; but when they came they found him dead at the bottom of it. Barnabas, in the utmost terror at this news, fled into the thickest part of the forest, and lay a long while there for dead.

The plague had not yet reached Padua, but was very severe at Parma. The son of Petrarch was one of its victims. Petrarch would have been much less touched with his death, on his own account, had it happened sooner; for this young man had expressed so much grief for his misconduct, and appeared so true a pe-

nitent, that Petrarch was well pleased with his penitence, and sincerely lamented his loss. He had just gained for him a benefice, bestowed by the lord of Verona. In a letter to a friend he says,

‘ Death takes my friends as usual, while I march cheerfully on. Your lord has restored the benefice about which you took so much pains; but death has taken it from me, and the young man who was to possess it: he died the same day he was to have been re-established in his rights. I am thus delivered of great burden, but it is not without grief. Adieu!’

It was upon this that Petrarch determined to marry Frances, his daughter. It is nowhere said in his works, where she lived, or was brought up. He chose for her the son of a gentleman of Milan, a most accomplished and amiable young man, of the sweetest temper, and the best dispositions. Boccace says of him, ‘ his figure was striking, his countenance calm and agreeable, his conversation discreet, and his behaviour gentle and polite.’ Frances had an agreeable figure, and resembled her father in person. She was submissive and faithful to her husband. Simplicity, modesty, attached to the duties of her station, and a



contempt of the pleasures of the world, formed her amiable character. Two such friends were delightful society for Petrarch : he took them into his house, and this affectionate union was uninterrupted to his death.



## BOOK VI.

THE plague, which raged this year, 1361, with violence, carried off Zanobi de Strata, who enjoyed his place of apostolic secretary only three years. The grand senechal, who had the tenderest friendship for him, and the greatest idea of his talents, could hardly support this stroke. 'The world,' says he, 'has lost a man who has not had his equal for a thousand years: I except only signior Francis Petrarch.' The grand senechal offered to Simonides, the prior of the Holy Apostles, the place Zanobi held under him at Naples, and, with many entreaties, engaged him to accept it. He had not on this occasion consulted Petrarch; but when he arrived at Naples, he wrote him the following letter:

'You will be astonished at receiving a letter from me here, and at my long silence, which has been occasioned by a variety of affairs.' He invites Petrarch to come to him. He was then at a country-house of the grand senechal's,



of which he gives this fine description. 'Do you seek solitude? Here are deserts that seem to have been contrived for poets, by art and nature united. Do you wish the cheerful societies of cities to unbend from studies? you have Amalphi to the right, Salerno to the left. Do you love the sea? you are on its banks near enough to throw in your nets, and count the fish they enclose. I speak not of the fine gardens all around, exceeding in neatness and beauty all the rest of Italy. In the middle of a delightful valley, a river rolls its transparent waters, with an agreeable murmur over the shining pebbles. The magnificent villas, scattered on all sides, appear to rise out of the rocks, rather than to have been the work of man. The air is delightfully temperate, and the land produces every year fruits of the most exquisite taste. In short, here is every thing that can delight the senses springing upon the spot, and brought from other countries, both by land and by sea.'

The grand senechal joined his entreaties to those of Simonides, to which Petrarch replied,

'I have learnt with pleasure that you are in Campania: my better half then, as Horace says of Virgil, is there also, provided you are happy: but how should you be otherwise, with

such a host as our common Mæcenas, with a mind like yours, and those virtues which follow you to every clime? I need no temptations to accept your offers: your requests, and those of your Mæcenas, would be my only inducements: but I wonder you are not fatigued with asking what I am weary of refusing: I can only beg you to recollect what I have said a thousand times on this subject.' The charge of apostolic secretary, through the influence of the cardinal de Taillerand, was again offered to Petrarch, with additional advantages annexed, and the most ardent solicitations he would accept it: but he persisted in his refusal; in which he notices very keenly the pope's opinion of him as a forcerer, and recommends Simonides and Boccace as more worthy of the office.

'Pardon me,' says he, in a letter to the former, 'if I have done wrong in naming you: if you accept this employment, you will procure wealth and fame; if you refuse it, the refusal will do you honor: as they have thought me capable of it, they will suppose me also a judge of this capacity in others. Whether they despise or concur with my judgment, I have seized this occasion of saying what I think of you: and though it would be more in cha-



rather another should have told you this, I have not deferred writing, that you might have time to prepare your answer. I have not forgot to join with your praise that of your Mæcenas, and that to him they must address themselves if they wish to obtain you. What idea ought they not to have of a man who raises up such subjects for the church as yourself and Zanobi ! This glory reflects also on our country, which produces both the one and the other.'

At the beginning of the year 1362, the plague deprived Petrarch of his beloved friend Socrates. 'He was,' says he, 'of all men, the dearest to my heart; my first, my darling friend: from the first hour we met, we loved with mutual tenderness. His sentiments and dispositions towards me have never varied during the space of one-and-thirty years; a rare and astonishing thing to say of a man born among barbarians: but the habit of living with me, my society and friendship, had inspired him with such a taste for our manners and opinions, that he was become a perfect Italian. Yes, he was our Socrates, the Socrates of Italy: and his singular transformation was the joy and honor of my life, and the admiration of all the world !'

The plague and war rendered Italy at this

time so disagreeable to Petrarch, that he had resolved on a journey to Vacluse as soon as the severe frosts would permit him to pass the Alps. But when he came to Milan he found them impassable. Barnabas was come out of his den, and had again attacked Bologna. The plague had enriched his coffers, because he had taken possession of the estates and wealth of those who died without heirs. Become prouder than ever, he made exorbitant demands of the pope, who engaged in a league with several of the Italian princes against him. Barnabas hearing of it, said, 'They are children; I will have them all whipt.'

The emperor of Germany sent to Petrarch, at this time, a third invitation, in very pompous and flattering terms, which Petrarch promised to accept, but was prevented by the impossibility of a safe passage. The grand senechal of Naples wrote also to Petrarch, to thank him for his attention to Simonides. In his letter he says, 'Since Providence permits me not to obtain what I have long wished for, I beseech you earnestly, my master and my friend, the honor of my country, that you judge me worthy of your admirable letters, which will not only render my name honorable to posterity, but



the few days of life that remain to me delightful to myself.'

In Petrarch's answer, he mentions the death of Lewis, king of Naples, and how little honor he did to the advice given him through Nicholas Acciajoli. 'We may say with reason,' adds he, 'that virtue is not obtained by precepts. This prince had little dignity, and less authority: he had neither knowledge nor prudence, and gloried in deceit. He loved a debauched life, and was avaricious of money to an extreme. He often suspected his greatest friend the seneschal; but had recourse to him in every critical conjuncture. He slighted the queen his wife, and treated her as one of his subjects; and he tired all around him with the detail of his great actions both in peace and war.'

Boccace, hearing that Petrarch proposed going to Germany, was much alarmed, and reproached him for his intention of dragging the Muses into Sarmatia, when Italy was the only true Parnassus. In this letter he gives Petrarch an account of a singular adventure which had just happened to him.

'A Carthusian of Sienna, whom I know not, came to me at Florence, and asked to

ſpeak to me in private. “ I came hither,” ſays he, “ from the deſire of the bleſſed father Petroni, a Carthuſian of Sienna, who, though he never ſaw you, by the illumination of heaven knows you thoroughly. He charged me to repreſent to you your extreme danger, unleſs you reform your manners and your writings, which are the inſtruments the devil uſes to draw men into his ſnares, to tempt them to ſinful luſts, and to promote the depravity of their conduct. Ought you not to bluſh for ſuch an abuſe of the talents God has given you for his glory? What a reward might you have obtained, had you made a good uſe of that wit and eloquence with which he has endowed you! On the contrary, what ought you not to fear, for devoting yourſelf to love, and waging war with modeſty, by giving leſſons of libertinism both in your life and writings! The bleſſed Petroni, celebrated for his miracles, and the ſobriety of his life, ſpeaks to you by my voice. He charged me, in his laſt moments, to beſeech and exhort you, in the moſt ſacred manner, to renounce poetry, and thoſe profane ſtudies which have been your conſtant employment, and prevented your diſcharging your duty as a Chriſtian. If you do not follow my directions,



be assured you have but a short time to live, and that you shall suffer eternal punishments after your death. God has revealed this to father Petroni, who gave me a strict charge to inform you of it."

The Carthusian who spoke thus to Boccace was called Joachim Ciani: he was the countryman and friend of father Petroni, who died in a religious rapture May 1361; and, it was said, wrought several miracles before and after his death. Father Ciani was with him when he was on his death-bed, and heard him utter several predictions concerning different persons, among whom was Petrarch. Boccace, terrified at what father Ciani had said, asked him how his friend came to know him and Petrarch, as they had no knowledge of his friend; to which the good Carthusian replied, 'Father Petroni had resolved to undertake something for the glory of God; but death preventing him, he prayed to God with fervour to point out some one who should execute his enterprize. His prayer was heard: Jesus Christ appeared to him, and he saw written on his face all that passes upon earth, the present, the past, and the future. After this he cast his eyes upon me for the performance of this good work,

and charged me with this commission for you, with some others to Naples, France, and England ; after which I shall go to Petrarch.'

To convince Boccace of the truth of what he said, the holy father acquainted him with a secret which Boccace thought none knew but himself. This discovery, and the threat that he had not long to live, impressed him so strongly, that he was no longer the same man. Seized with a panic terror, and believing death at his heels, he reformed his manners, renounced love and poetry, and determined to part with his library, which was almost entirely composed of profane authors. In this situation of his mind he wrote to his master Petrarch, to give him an account of what had happened to him, of the resolution he had made to reform his manners, and to offer him his library, giving him the preference to all others ; and begging he would fix the price of the books, some of which might serve as a discharge of some debts he owed him. Petrarch's reply to this letter was as follows:

'To see Jesus Christ with bodily eyes is indeed a wonderful thing ! it only remains that we know if it is true. In all ages men have covered falsehoods with the veil of religion, that the appearance of divinity might



conceal the human fraud. When I have myself beheld the messenger of father Petroni, I shall see what faith is to be given to his words: his age, his forehead, his eyes, his behaviour, his clothes, his motions, his manner of sitting, his voice, his discourse, and the whole united, will serve to enlighten my judgment.

‘As to what respects yourself, that you are not long for this world, if we reflect coolly, this is a matter of joy rather than of sorrow. Was it an old man on the borders of the grave, one might justly say to him, Do not at your years give yourself up to poetry; leave the Muses and Parnassus, they only suit the days of youth. Your imagination is extinguished, your memory fails, your feelings are lost; think rather of death, who is at your heels, and prepare yourself for that awful passage. But for a man in the middle age of life, who has cultivated letters and the muses with success from his youth, and who makes them his amusement in riper years, to renounce them then, is to deprive himself of a great consolation. If this had been required at Lactantius, of St. Augustin, or St. Jerome, would the former have discovered the absurdities of the heathen superstition? Would St. Augustin with so much art

have built up the city of God, or St. Jerome combated heretics with so much strength and success? I know, by experience, how much the knowledge of letters may contribute to produce just opinions, to render a man eloquent, to perfect his manners, and, which is much more important, to defend his religion. If men were not permitted to read poets and heathen writers, because they do not speak of Jesus Christ, whom they never knew, how much less ought they to read the works of heretics who oppose his doctrine? yet this is done with the greatest care by all the defenders of the faith. It is with profane authors as with solid food, it nourishes the man who has a good stomach, and is pernicious only to those who cannot digest it: to the mind that is judicious they are wholesome, but poison to the weak and ignorant. Letters may even render the former more religious, of which we have many examples, and to them they will never be an obstacle to piety. There are many ways of arriving at truth and heaven; long, short, clear, obscure, high, and low, according to the different necessities of men; but ignorance is the only road the idle walk in. Surely wisdom may produce as many saints as folly; and we should be careful that we never compare a lazy



and blind devotion with an enlightened and industrious piety. If you resolve, however, to part with your books, I will never suffer them to fall into base hands. Though separated in body, we are united in mind. I cannot fix any price upon them; and I will make only one condition with you, that we pass the remainder of our lives together, and that you shall thus enjoy my books and your own. Why do you speak of debt to me? you owe me nothing but friendship; and herein we are equal, because you have always rendered love for love. Be not, however, deaf to the voice of a friend who calls you to him. I cannot enrich you; if I could, you would have been rich long ago; but I have all that is requisite for two friends, who are united in heart, and sheltered under the same roof.'

It was doubtless the Decameron of Boccace which drew upon him the adventure we have related. It consists of a hundred novels, which are related as the amusement of seven ladies, and three gentlemen, who went to pass some days in the country, two miles from Florence, to escape the infected air of that city. Among these novels there are some true stories that Boccace had been a witness of, or had learnt from good information; the rest are only tales

he had read or heard of. He possessed the talent of story-telling in perfection. Nothing can be more plain and natural, skilful, or elegant, than his compositions; his words seem formed on purpose for his descriptions. Men of wit in Italy agree that the Decameron exceeds in style every other book in their language; and that it is very remarkable that Boccace should carry the vulgar tongue all at once to its perfection, which had been left to the people, and the rust of which had been but in part rubbed off by Dante.

No book, perhaps, had ever so many readers, and so many censurers, as the Decameron: the devotees were for having it burnt; and the monks were enraged against him, because he had taken many of his tales from the convents, and had severely satirized their licentiousness of manners. To attack the monks, said they, is to attack religion itself; and to publish their infamy, is to be guilty of impiety. To this they added, that Boccace was an atheist. He did not take the pains to answer them seriously, but turns them into ridicule in a very pleasant manner at the end of his Decameron. He composed this work as an amusement only, and was far from beholding it as the ground of his reputation. What would have been his af-



tonishment if he had been told, 'Your other works will remain buried in obscurity, while your Decameron will go through more than two hundred editions, will be translated into all languages, and will be read by all the world!'

Boccace was not arrived at a mature age when he composed the Decameron: its lively air was suited to tales, and its free representations to the vices it censures; and at the time when he wrote it, the plague had made a great change in the manners and customs of society: the women, of whom only a few remained, having most of them lost their husbands, their parents, and all who had authority over them, thought themselves no longer subject to those rigid decorums which formerly restrained their conduct. Having no persons of their own sex to attend them during the plague, they employed men as their servants; which introduced a violation of the laws of modesty and reserve. With respect to the convents, it is not surprising that Boccace should find subjects in them for his licentious tales. The plague had opened their gates, and the monks and nuns coming forth into the world, and living without restraint, had lost the spirit of their profession; and when the plague ceased, they continued the same course of life. The historians of

those times give us dreadful pictures of their debauchery ; and the ecclesiastical writers look upon the plague of 1348 as the true period of the relaxation of monastic discipline.

The Decameron gives an animated view of those times, satirizes the vices that prevailed, and contains some lively images of human life, and very judicious representations of the characters of men. But the judgment of Petrarch respecting profane authors may be very usefully applied to the readers of this work : and it is probable this book did a good deal of mischief in Italy, since the wise fathers of the council of Trent forbade the reading of it till it should be corrected.

Father Ciani's visit and conversation occasioned so great a revolution in the mind of Boccace, that he was not only for renouncing poetry and Pagan authors, but it was reported he was going to turn Carthusian, and a sonnet on this subject was addressed to him by Franco Sacchetti, one of the best poets of that time. It appears that Petrarch's well judged answer re-established the peace of his mind, and made him renounce his chimerical projects : he kept his books, and continued his studies ; but it is certain he also reformed his life, and did all he could to suppress his Decameron ; but that



was impossible, there were too many copies of it spread abroad.

In the month of June, 1362, the plague spread to Padua, and made such havoc there that Petrarch removed to Venice; it had not yet reached that city. Villani says, 'It came like hail, which, after ravaging the fields to the right and to the left, spares those in the middle.'

The war did not permit Petrarch to go to France or Germany, and the plague drove him from Milan and Padua. Venice appeared to him the surest asylum against these two scourges. 'I fled not from death,' says he; 'but I sought repose.'

Petrarch always took his books when he went any long journey, which rendered travelling incommodious and expensive to him, as he required for their conveyance such a number of horses. When he had been some time at Venice, it came into his mind not to offer these books to a religious order, as he once proposed, but to place this treasure in the care of the republic, to whom he wrote as follows:

'Francis Petrarch desires to have the blessed evangelist Mark for the heir of those books he has and may have, on condition that they shall

neither be fold or feparated; and that they fhall all be placed in fafety, fheltered from fire and water, and preferved with care for ever for his honor, and the ufe and amufement of the noble and learned perfons of this city. If he makes this depofit, it is not becaufe he has a great idea of his books, or believes he has formed a fine library; but he hopes by this means the illuftrious city of Venice will acquire other trusts of the fame kind from the public; that the citizens who love their country, the nobles above all, and even fome ftrangers, will follow his example, and leave their books to this church at their death, which may one day become a great library, and equal thofe of the ancients. Every one muft fee how honorable this will be to the republic. Petrarch will be much flattered with having been the original fource of fo great a good. If his defign fucceeds, he will explain himfelf more minutely hereafter upon this fubject; in the mean time he offers to execute this his promife.'

This propofal having been examined and approved, and the procurators of the church of St. Mark having offered to be at the neceffary expences for the placing and preferving thefe books, the republic made the following decree:



‘ Considering the offer that messire Francis Petrarch has made us, whose reputation is so great, that we do not remember to have met in the Christian world with a moral philosopher and poet united who can compare with him; persuaded that this offer may contribute to the glory of God and of St. Mark, and do much honor to our city, we will accept it on the conditions he has made; and we order such a sum to be taken from our revenue as will purchase him a house for his life, according to the advice of the governor, counsellors, and chiefs.’

In compliance with this decree, Petrarch had assigned for his dwelling, and that of his books, a large mansion called the Palace of the Two Towers, belonging to the family of Molina. It is at present the monastery of the monks of St. Sepulchre.

This house was of an immense size, and had two very high towers. It was delightfully situated fronting the port. Petrarch was delighted to see the vessels come in and go out: ‘ These vessels,’ says he, ‘ resemble a mountain swimming on the sea, and go into all parts of the world amidst a thousand perils, to carry our wines to the English, our honey to the Scythians; our saffron, our oils, our linen, to

the Syrians, to the Armenians, to the Persians, and the Arabians; and, which is more incredible, they carry our woods to the Achaians and Egyptians. From all these countries they bring merchandises which they carry all over Europe. They go even to the Tanais: the navigation of our sea extends no farther than that towards the north; but when they are there, they quit their ships, and go to trade in the Indies and to China, and, after having passed the Ganges and the Caucasus, they go by land as far as the Eastern Ocean. Behold what men will do for the thirst of gold!

Petrarch's view toward the republic was fulfilled; several cardinals left their libraries to it after his example, and it appeared the best and safest perpetuation of many valuable authors: but by the humidity of the place they were almost all destroyed, together with a precious manuscript written by the evangelist St. Mark.

At this time there happened a great event at Avignon, which disconcerted all Petrarch's measures for his friend Simonides. Pope Innocent VI. died the 12th of September 1362; he was a good and simple man. The cardinals cast their eyes on his brother Hugues Roger, a man of great worth, whose virtue and



modesty had gained him universal respect; but he refused this dignity. They then elected William Grimoard, abbe of St. Victor. All the world was astonished, and even the cardinals themselves, at the choice of a pope who was not of the sacred college. Petrarch says to Urban, in a letter some time after, 'It was the effect of divine inspiration; it was God, not the cardinals, elected you to the papacy, making the hands and tongues of men the instruments of his good pleasure. Your name,' adds he, 'was pronounced without their intention. Full of pride, they esteem themselves alone, and despise all others. Each one aspires to the supreme dignity, and thinks himself the only one who deserves it: but, as he cannot name himself, he elects another, from whom he expects the same return. How should it come into their mind to bestow on a stranger what they aimed at themselves; to rise so high the chief of a simple monastery, though they had every proof of his holiness and faith? How should they think of placing over them as a master, the man whom they had been used to command? No: it was God who placed you in their ballots without their design. What must have been their surprise, and that of all the world, when they beheld an abbe elected,

while there were so many cardinals who might pretend to the papacy !'

As William Grimoard was in Italy, the cardinals sent a courier to inform him of his election, and agreed to keep it secret till he had accepted it. He had been sent to Naples with a compliment of condolence to queen Jane on the death of king Lewis, and to watch over her conduct. He was at Florence when he heard of the pope's death ; and when he went from thence, Villani assures us, he said, ' If I beheld a pope who would re-establish the holy see, and overthrow the tyrants, I should be content to die the day after.' The courier, having overtaken him on his route, received his answer. He arrived himself at Avignon soon after, and was enthroned the next day by the name of Urban V. which he preferred to all others, because all who had borne that name were distinguished for their piety. Petrarch says, this choice proved the goodness of the pope, and his design to shew kindness to all the world. At his coronation he forbade the cavalcade that used to pass through the city, though all was ready for it according to custom, because it appeared to him vain glorious. He was very learned in the canon law, had been employed by Innocent in several pub-



lic negotiations, and had acquired so great a reputation for faith and piety, that every one applauded this election.

King John, who was at Villeneuve, made his entrance into Avignon, and dined with the new pope. He took this occasion to make him four demands; the tenths of the benefices for six years, the disposal of the four first hats, the mediation of peace between the holy see and Barnabas Visconti, and the consent of the pope for the marriage of his son Philip with queen Jane of Naples. Urban, with great skill, eluded all these demands. The king staid at Villeneuve to the end of December. Nicholas Arme, who was in his train, pronounced a discourse before the pope and the cardinals with great pathos, in which he draws a frightful picture of the manners of the Roman court. This gave him the honor of a place among the witnesses for the truth against the popes.

Petrarch was full of joy at this exaltation, knowing the great qualities of the pope, and his design to re-establish the holy see at Rome. He was again solicited by Urban to accept the place of secretary, still vacant, but he continued immovable. While he was rejoicing at this public event, he was informed of a private one that grieved him exceedingly; this was the

death of Azon de Correege, who had been for some time in a languishing state, but the strength of his constitution had struggled through every disorder, till the plague put an end to his life. He left a widow of the house of Gonzagua, and two children, Gilbert and Lewis de Correege, who had been brought up by Modeo, that generous young man at Parma. They all wrote to Petrarch to acquaint him with their loss, and to seek some consolation in his friendship. The children said in their letter, 'We look upon you at present as our father and our master.' 'I accept,' replied Petrarch, 'the first with pleasure; though I merit not such children as you are; but I reject the second, which does not become me. Ever since you came into the world I have adopted you for my children, and revered you as my masters. I have not changed my sentiments, and I shall feel all my life for you as I have done for your father. I exhort and conjure you, with tears in my eyes, to live in such a manner that the world may be able to say that your father has left children worthy of him, and that, instead of one friend and one master that I have lost, I may gain in you two friends and two masters resembling him. This will be easy for you to accomplish, if you are obedient to the counsels



of your respectable mother, and submissive to her orders.'

In his letter to Modco, Petrarch speaks thus of Azon's friendship for him: 'He loved no one as he did me, and said I was the only person who had never given him any cause of complaint, either by my words or actions; that he had sometimes little domestic uneasinesses, even with his wife, that pious and amiable woman, and with his children, though gentle and obedient; but that his affection increased every day for me, and he interested himself tenderly in all my concerns.

'All who would obtain any thing of him, disclosed their errand by first speaking kindly of me. I found in him the assistance of a master, the advice of a father, the submission of a son, and the tenderness of a brother. I passed with him a great part of my life; every thing was common between us, good or bad fortune, the pleasures of town or country; his glorious labors, his happy leisure, nothing was excepted: when we journeyed together, he would expose his life for mine. Alas! why did he not take me with him in the last journey he will ever make?'

These letters were transcribed from a manuscript in the Medicis library. The widow of

Azon wrote also, but her letters are lost. She was a lady of the greatest merit. Soon after the death of her husband, her brother Hugolin de Gonzagua, a man of great genius, and possessed of a most graceful person, was assassinated by his brothers, who were jealous of the authority his father had left him in at Mantua. Petrarch says, 'I did not dare to touch upon this string in my letter, the poor woman is afflicted enough already.'

The plague having reached Florence, Boccace went to Naples, where he was invited by Nicholas Acciajoli; but not enduring any dependence, he stayed but a short time with the grand senechal at Amalphi, where he lived like a sovereign prince. He came to Venice to his friend Petrarch, who was rejoiced to see him, and shewed him every mark of friendship.

Boccace brought with him a man of a very singular character; he was a Greek of Thessalonica, called Leonce Pilate; he gives us this description of him. 'He had a very ugly face, and a terrifying countenance: he had a long beard, and stiff black hair, which he scarce ever combed. Plunged in continual meditation, he neglected all the rules of society, was rude and clownish, without the least civility or good manners. But, to make up for these



defects, he was perfect in the Greek tongue, and his head was full of the Grecian history and mythology: he had but a superficial knowledge of the Latin; but, persuaded it was honorable to claim a foreign original, he called himself a Greek in Italy, and an Italian in Greece.' Boccace met with him in 1360, going from Venice to Avignon: he took him to his house at Florence, and procured him a professorship for the Greek language in that university. Leonce explained the poems of Homer there for two years, and gave lessons upon them in private to Boccace. This Greek was not unknown to Petrarch; Boccace had often spoken of him, and joined with him in a letter to Petrarch in the character of Homer, complaining that his works were very little known in Italy, and his name had hardly reached the Alps; and that even in his own country they had lost a great part of them. He then speaks of the ingratitude of his imitators, above all, Virgil, who has not so much as named him, though ornamented with his spoils; that his name, revered in former times by lawyers and physicians, is at present the sport of the public; that Leonce Pilate has dragged him to Florence, where he is as it were exiled, having only three friends: he concludes by beseeching Petrarch

to take him under his protection, and shelter him from the insults of the vulgar.

Petrarch begins his answer with this address :

‘ Petrarch, little man, to the prince of the Greek Muse :’ and then proceeds to answer his complaints. ‘ As to the loss of your books, this is the fate of all human things : and who shall complain hereafter in the same situation, since the sun of eloquence has suffered an eclipse ? As to your imitators, always sure of the first place, you ought to be pleased with those who try to equal you, and fall so short : for my own part, I wish for some to surpass me : as to Virgil, he had the most generous of souls, and if we believe Horace, was incapable of ingratitude. He has spoken of Theocritus in his *Bucolics*, and of Hesiod in his *Georgics*, whom he copied : how came he then not to speak of you in his *Æneid* ? It was because he destined to you the most honorable place, and would conclude his poem with your eulogy. Death prevented him ; of that alone you can complain.

‘ Do you forget the answer he made to those who accused him of pillaging your verses ? “ He must be strong indeed who can take the club from Hercules.” You feel the salt of this



reply. As to the contempt in which you have been held by some ; there are persons whom it is an honor to displease : it happens to you as to the sun ; weak-eyed people, and the birds of night, cannot support its lustre : all who have possessed a ray of genius, have regarded you not only as a philosopher, but as the first and most sublime of philosophers.

‘ You are not to wonder you have met with three friends only in Florence, a city immersed in trade ; but I am astonished you should call it an exile to be brought out of Greece into Italy. Consider, however, you will find a fourth, and we may add a fifth, friend there, who have received the laurel crown : and, as the world goes, five friends in one city is something to boast of. Look among the other cities, you find one at Bologna, the mother of science, two at Verona, and one at Mantua, if he has not quitted your colours, to follow those of Ptolemy. Perugia produced but one lover of science, and he abandoned Parnassus, the Appennine, and the Alps, to run about Spain. At Rome I know of none at present, but I knew many there and elsewhere formerly, who exist no longer upon earth. But are not persons of this character rare even in your country ? The friend who exiled you to Florence is perhaps the only

Greek attached to you ; you had another who was my preceptor, Borlaam, the famous Greek, who died soon after I had obtained him a bishopric. You ask my protection, and seek a refuge in my house ; but what can I do for you when I cannot defend myself ? If you were persecuted through envy in the learned city of Athens, what can we hope for from these cities, plunged in ignorance and voluptuousness ? Though I do not merit a guest like you, I am seeking your acquaintance with ardour ; and if the Theffalian perfects his instructions, I shall soon complete the friendship which I have so long desired. I have prepared you a habitation in my inmost heart ; nothing can equal the love and esteem I have for you.'

Petrarch and Boccace passed the summer together in the most delightful manner. Benintendi, chancellor of Venice, came frequently to visit them in the evening when he had finished his public affairs, and took them upon the water in his gondola : he was a man of letters, an excellent companion, and a sincere friend and admirer of Petrarch. There were some other persons of genius who joined this little refined society ; Donat de Albanzani and Peter de Muglo. The former was a grammarian, born in the mountains of the Appennine, a man,



of very amiable dispositions and agreeable conversation. "He was poor, (says Boccace;) but full of honor, and one of my best friends." The latter was a celebrated rhetorician: he was formerly a professor at Padua, and called himself the scholar of Petrarch; in his old age he went to Bologna, and had for his pupil the famous Coluccio Salutati.

The affairs of Boccace required his return to Florence; and when he heard the plague was less violent, he left Venice. Petrarch, who loved him affectionately, feared the air was not yet purified, and was extremely grieved at his departure. Boccace would have taken with him Leonce Pilate, but he wanted to return to his country, and waited for a ship to set sail for Constantinople. Petrarch wished to detain him somewhat longer, but he embarked soon after. Petrarch adds to the picture Boccace gave of him, that he was sour, arrogant, and sometimes almost crazy; so filthy as to disgust every one; and very inconsiderate and rude in his expressions, of which he gives us an example. One day, when they were together at a solemn feast, where they sung high mass according to the Roman ritual, with all the accustomed ceremonies, 'I cannot support,' said the Greek, 'the nonsense of these Latins.' Pe-

trarch was extremely offended and alarmed with his want of delicacy in this solemn situation. 'If the people had heard these words,' says he, 'they would have stoned the unfortunate Greek. Though I wished for more instruction from him, I was not sorry for his departure. I feared I might catch his sour, melancholy humour; it is a disease of the soul as contagious as the disorders of the body.' Petrarch treated him, however, with great kindness; and, as he perceived he read the comedies of Terence with pleasure, he gave him a copy of them to amuse him upon his voyage: 'Though I cannot imagine,' says he, 'how the most gloomy of the Greeks can relish the most lively of the Africans.'

In the year 1363 a priest, whom Petrarch had charged with a letter for Lelius, called on his return from Rome, and with a mournful silence put Petrarch's letter into his hand without speaking a word. Petrarch, perceiving his own characters and seal, cried out hastily, 'What does this mean? Why is this letter still sealed up? What is Lelius about? Where is he?' The priest kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and made no reply. Petrarch too well comprehended his meaning, and gave himself up to grief. He had lived thirty years in the greatest friendship with Lelius. This loss was



followed almost immediately by that of Simonides, who died at Naples of the plague. The person who had closed his eyes brought the news to Petrarch. He sought in the bosom of his friend Boccace a consolation under these distresses, and beseeches him to come to Venice. 'You are dearer to me than ever, you are almost the only friend left me. I know not what is become of Barbatus, death ravages the country he inhabits. Comply with my request; you know my house, it is in a good air. Benintendi will pass his evenings with us, and our Donat, who has quitted the mountains of Tuscany for the banks of the Adriatic. An absolute solitude is contrary to humanity; but to a philosopher and a man of letters two or three friends are sufficient, because at the worst he can be satisfied with his own company. If you wish to vary your situation, we will go and spend some time at Trieste, or Capo de Istria, where they tell me the air is good. Let us join together in reviewing the works of Simonides, and fitting them for posterity; this is what I hoped from you and from him.' A few days after this he received the news that Barbatus was dead of the plague. The person from whom he received this account had passed his life with him, and besought Petrarch to write his

eulogy. Petrarch replied to his letter as follows :

‘ I ought to do what you desire ; Barbatus well deserves it ; the sun never shone upon a kinder and more elevated soul. Letters were his food, and he fled from pomp and pleasure : he was neither proud nor envious : he had great knowledge, and a memory to retain it ; a lively genius, and a flowing style. He preferred me to all the world, but fate separated us ever since the death of that incomparable prince who united us : we have lived at a distance from each other, so that I am ignorant of his manner of life, what passed in his house, what he did for the republic, or his writings since that time. You, who have passed your life with him, can do nothing more honorable for your country, or yourself, than to make his works known : never was there a better citizen. I do not except Ovid, whose manners were not answerable to his genius. Barbatus had more understanding than Ovid, and his manners were irreproachable. The letters I have written to him are a proof of the singular esteem in which I held him.’

The place of apostolic secretary being still vacant, Francis Bruni wrote to Petrarch that he was known to the pope, who had often shewn



him favor, and that he begged he would write a letter of recommendation for him to his holiness. Petrarch replied, that it would be impertinent in a man like him to recommend one known and beloved by the pope. He wrote, however, to Avignon; and it was, no doubt, owing to the character he gave of him, that this office was conferred upon Bruni. When Petrarch was informed of it, he gave him some admirable advice on his conduct in this important place: and, speaking of the Roman pontiff, he says,

‘There is not a greater or more respectable character; his peer is not in the world; but he ought, in his very elevated station, to be more humble and meek than he was before. He ought not to forget that he holds on earth the place of him who says, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” Does it then suit the vicar of a humble Lord to be proud and arrogant in spirit?’

Petrarch, writing to Boccace at this time, speaks of the Italian jugglers, who were poets and musicians joined: they went to the palaces of princes, or the castles of great lords, to sing their praises: their songs were sometimes satirical, on various subjects; and they accompanied them with the harp, or some other in-

strument. 'They are a set of people,' says Petrarch, 'who have little genius, great memories, and still greater impudence. Having nothing of their own, they cover themselves with the spoils of others, and declaim with emphasis the verses they have learned by heart: they hereby conciliate the favor of the great, who give them money, clothes, and sometimes considerable presents. They seek these means of living among authors, whose verses they obtain by prayers, or money, when the necessities of the author, or his covetousness, will part with them on these conditions. I have often been troubled with their importunities; but, silenced by my refusals, they come rarely to me at present: now and then, touched by the misery of the petitioner, I give him a production to procure him food. Some, who have gone from me naked and penniless, have returned some time after dressed in silk, their purse well filled, to give me thanks for having relieved their distress. I asked one of them why he always came to me, why he did not go to others, to Boccace, for instance: he replied, he had often, and without success. As I was surprised that a man so prodigal of his wealth should be so avaricious of his poetry, they told me he had burnt all his verses in the vulgar



tongue, because they were inferior to mine. Tell me, is it from pride or modesty you have done this? Did I even precede you, who should be so happy to walk in the same line, would there not be too much presumption in refusing the second or third place, and beholding with impatience the superiority of two or three fellow-citizens?’

The first rank in letters had been given to Dante, the second to Petrarch, and the third to Boccace. Petrarch proceeds in his letter to comment upon the ignorance of his age.

‘Age obscure and inglorious!’ says he. ‘Thou despisest Antiquity, thy mother, the inventress of all the arts; thou darest to compare thyself to her, and even arrogate the preference. I speak not of the people in general, whose opinion is always to be despised; or of the military, who think their art in its perfection when it is in the decline, and who go to combat dressed out as for a wedding, more occupied to please their mistresses than terrify their enemies; their ignorance is their excuse. I pass over in silence also those kings who make royalty consist in gold and purple, the sceptre and the diadem, while they are governed by their own passions; prosperity blinds them, and how then should they penetrate into an-

tiquity? But what can men of letters alledge, who are guilty of the same error? who condemn Plato and Aristotle, make a mock of Socrates and Pythagoras, despise Cicero, that god of eloquence, think slightly of Varro and Seneca, and look upon the style of Livy and Sallust to be rude and vulgar? I had a conversation one day with a philosopher of this kind, who went beyond all that I have said, and had the horrid presumption to blaspheme against Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his gospel. I was talking with him in my library, and I happened to quote some passages from the sacred books: he replied, his brows bent with displeasure, "Keep to yourself your doctors of the church; I know very well who ought to be followed." "You speak," said I, "with the authority of the apostle Paul; I wish you thought as he did." "Your St. Paul," he replied, "is a fool, and a sower of words." "It is true," said I, "that the seed he has sown has had great success, cultivated by his successors; and, watered with the blood of the martyrs, it has produced an abundant harvest." With an air of compassion, and a contemptuous grin, he replied, "Be a good Christian as long as you please; for my part, I believe nothing about it: your Paul, your Augustine, and all



the others you boast of, were only idle babblers. Oh ! if you could read Averroes, you would see how superior he is to them all !” I own that this blasphemy put me into such a passion, it was with difficulty I could contain : “ Go,” said I to him, “ hold elsewhere such discourses as these ;” and, taking him by the cloak, I put him out of my house with more roughness than suited my character. There are a multitude of such people as these, whose insolence and ignorance nothing can suppress ; neither the respect due to Jesus Christ, nor the fear of inquisitors, prisons, or faggots, nothing can make any impression upon them. These are the people, my dear friend, with whom we live, and who take upon them the office of our judges. Not content with having lost the works of the ancients, they insult their manes : eager after novelties, they attach themselves to new guides, spread abroad new doctrines, and despise all that are ancient. We cannot hope for better judges in posterity : licentiousness increases every day, and the number of its philosophers ; the schools, market-places, and streets, are full of them.

Soon after writing this letter, Petrarch went and passed the autumn at Pavia : Galeas Visconti had built there the finest palace in the

world. At Easter he went always to Padua, to discharge at that holy time the office of his canonry. The Florentines, who asked him to reside in his own city, applied to the pope to grant him a canonry there. The pope had something better in view for him; but the rumour of his death being spread over France, the pope disposed of that, and the benefices of Petrarch, many of which the latter, unknown to him, had given away to his friends: this caused a great disturbance in the Roman court. This false report had spread to Italy, and they wept for him at Milan, and even at Padua, which is so near Venice, 'that had I been dead,' says he, 'they might have heard my last sigh there.' He had a sort of complaint which was very troublesome, and occasioned so great an itching, that he was unable to write, or employ himself in his usual affairs: this was the only ground of the report.

In 1365 Boccace went to Avignon on some public affair. He wrote to Petrarch, giving an account of his friends whom he saw at Avignon, and particularly Philip de Cabaffole, now made patriarch of Jerusalem. As soon as he saw Boccace, though he knew him not, he ran to embrace him in the presence of the pope



and the cardinals, asking with impatience for news of his dear Petrarch.

Petrarch some months after this sent his Treatise on Solitude to Philip de Cabassole, which he had long promised, but could not before get copied. This prelate wrote to Petrarch to thank him for his book: he assured him the pope and the cardinal Gui of Bologna were desirous of it; that the archbishop of Embrun, and the bishop of Lisbon, had read it with great pleasure. 'As to myself,' adds he, 'I delight in it so much, that I make them read it to me at my repasts.'

'You have the eyes of a lynx,' replies Petrarch, 'but your friendship for me has blinded you; it is always equally ardent. You will cause me at length to esteem my own works; for why should I suppose that so many great men are deceived in their judgments? Truly you will inspire me with confidence and emulation!'

Donat, the friend of Petrarch at Venice, came one morning to inform him of the tragical death of Leonce Pilate. When he was got to Greece, he wrote Petrarch a letter as long and as dirty as his hair and his beard, in which he praised Italy to the skies, said every

ill thing he could devise of Greece, and cursed Byzantium. He concluded by desiring from Petrarch a letter of recommendation to the emperor of Constantinople, by whom he assured him he was as well thought of as by the emperor of Rome. Petrarch made no answer to this letter. The Greek, who sighed after Italy, and wanted to be recalled there by Petrarch, wrote several times to acknowledge his error in returning to Greece, and to desire him to pardon it; but Petrarch, who knew his natural inconstancy of humour, and believed him too old to alter, agreed with Boccace to give him no answer. 'This Greek,' said he, 'who would have been useful to our studies, if he were not a savage beast, shall never be recalled by me. It is but just that a man who, though in misery, trampled under foot the delights of Italy, should drag out a miserable life at Byzantium. Let him go, if he will, with his filthy beard, his ragged cloak, and his brutish manners, and keep the labyrinth of Crete, where I know he passed several years.'

Notwithstanding Petrarch's continued silence, Leonce embarked for Venice in the first ship he could meet with, persuaded that Petrarch and Boccace would behold him again with pleasure, or at least that they would not shut



their doors against him. Having safely passed the Bosphorus, the Propontis, the Hellespont, the Egean and Ionic seas, he was entered happily into the Adriatic, when there arose on a sudden a dreadful storm. While every one was employed in the necessary business of the ship, the terrified Greek had bound himself to a mast, when a flash of lightning setting fire to the cords of the sails, he was consumed in a moment. The people in the ship were seized with terror, but no one perished except Leonce. The shapeless and half-roasted body of this miserable Greek was thrown into the sea, and devoured by the fish of Italy instead of the worms of Greece, to whom Petrarch had destined it. He was touched, however, with this event, and wrote to Boccace to impart it to him. 'This unfortunate man,' said he, 'is gone out of this world as mournfully as he came into it. I believe he never experienced one serene day. His physiognomy seemed to announce his catastrophe. I cannot divine how any sparks of poetic fire could ever penetrate into a soul enveloped with such thick darkness. His clothes and his books are not lost; I will have them sought; for perhaps there may be an Euripides, and a Sophocles, and some other books he promised me.' Petrarch was

ever assiduous in his search after the best Greek authors. He begged Boccace to send him the translation of Homer made by Leonce. It was written out fair by the hand of Boccace, who had worked at it with the Greek. The manuscript comprehended the whole Iliad, and a part of the Odyssey. Leonce had not finished the last. Petrarch had sighed for this Latin Homer many years. 'The Greek and Latin authors,' says he, 'which were in my library, received him with transports of joy.'

In February, 1366, there was great rejoicing in the house of Petrarch at Venice; Frances, his daughter, was brought to bed of a son, to whom Donat stood godfather, and to whom they gave the name of Francis. She had a daughter before this, born in 1363.

Every letter Petrarch received from Avignon, above all, from Philip de Cabasole, whose opinion weighed with him more than all the rest, was filled with the praises of Urban. The church resounded with his fame; nothing was talked of but his wit, his eloquence, his piety, his love of justice, his zeal for order, his bounty to the good, and his aversion to the wicked. He began his pontificate with the wisest regulations. He sent back the courtly prelates, and repressed the greediness of the ecclesiastics,



obliging most of them to be content with one benefice. He extended his care also to the reformation of luxury in the habits of the monks and clergy. The black monks had taken it into their heads to place upon their cowls high crooked bonnets, which they called horns. He forbade them to wear these bonnets; and the officers of his palace had orders to take them off by force if they appeared there in them. Petrarch highly approved these regulations, and only wished this great pope would extend his reformation to the dress of all the world, but principally in Italy. 'Who can behold,' says he, 'with patience, the shoes with pointed toes, so long that they will reach the knee; head-dresses with wings to them, the hair put into a tail; the foreheads of the men furrowed with the heads of those ivory needles with which the women fasten their hair, and their stomachs squeezed in by machines of iron? &c.'

One of the best reforms of Urban was the suppression of asylums. A man guilty of the greatest crimes, had only to take refuge in the court of a cardinal's palace, and he could not be pursued by justice. The cardinal de Tailerand, who knew the characters of men, foresaw this would be a great pontiff; for, a little

time after his exaltation, he said to some one who asked him his opinion of Urban, 'We have now indeed a pope.' Petrarch could not hear these things without shedding tears of joy, and was tempted to write to this great man. After some hesitation he was encouraged to do it. The chief of his letter is an ardent request that, after so many excellent works, he will put the finishing hand to all, by removing the holy see to Rome; and he speaks with the utmost freedom, and even presumption, on the subjects he was led to examine by the hope of this great event.

The answer of Urban was agreeable to the benevolence of his character. 'I received your letter,' says he, 'with pleasure, and read it with attention. I find many things in it worthy of praise, for the beauty of the thoughts, and the elegance of the style. I admire your eloquence, your wisdom, and your zeal, for the public good. I shall be charmed to see you, and to have it in my power to give you some tokens of my favor.'

Urban, who was more versed in the canon law than in history and the belles lettres, desired Francis Bruni to make some comment upon Petrarch's letter, that he might understand it with more ease. Every body at Avig-



non was astonished with this request. Soon after he received this letter, the pope, whose inclination was in perfect accord with it, declared his resolution to depart for Rome the Easter of the following year, and ordered the apostolical palace to be repaired, which had been long neglected, and that they should prepare lodgings for him at Viterbo, where he would stop. The king of France, who found it advantageous to have the pope in his neighbourhood, sent Nicholas Oreme, who made a very flat oration in full consistory. The pope replied to it with gravity, and in a few words, and shewed the impression it had made by hastening the preparations for his departure.

In 1366, Petrarch went to pass the hot months at Pavia. The court of Galeas Visconti was in the midst of joy and festivity at the baptism of a daughter, whom Isabella of France lay in of in May. Petrarch found Galeas himself in a pitiable state with the gout, which tormented him more than ever: he had it in his feet, hands, and shoulders; the other parts of his body were without motion, and his nerves so shrunk that he could not hold himself upright. The pains he suffered were so terribly sharp and severe, that his friends could not behold him without tears: his courage and

patience astonished all the world. It was indeed wonderful to behold a man of his rank, still young, of a delicate constitution, brought up in softness and pleasure, deprived of all his limbs, and suffering such agonies, without the least complaint. He looked upon his distempered body with as tranquil and serene an air as if it had been the body of another man. He sent to Florence for Thomas de Garbo, the greatest physician at that time in Italy. Thomas joined to a great knowledge in his profession a very extensive practice; he told Petrarch he had never seen so strong and so healthy a constitution as his in his life.

The 20th of July, 1366, Petrarch awaking at midnight, as was his custom, to say matins, recollected that just at that time he entered into his sixty-third year, which is looked upon as the most critical period of human life. 'I was born,' says he to Boccace, 'at Arezzo in 1304, on Monday the 20th of July, at the break of day. Many princes, philosophers, and saints, have died at this period: observe what happens to me, and judge from my fate.'

At the end of October, 1366, Petrarch received a visit from Stephen Colonna the younger, the only remaining branch of that illustrious family. He came from France, and was going



to Rome, to wait the arrival of the pope. After many hours of conversation, not having met for such a number of years, Stephen, in haste to depart, asked Petrarch if he should carry no message from him to the pope. Petrarch replied, ' After presenting my humble duty to the holy father, relate to him the following history, which is taken from Seneca. Alexander having acquired the name of Great by his victories in Asia, the Corinthians sent ambassadors to him to offer him the freedom of their city, a thing ridiculous in itself, but which they had never done to any but Hercules. This determined Alexander not to despise the present they made him. There are things mean in themselves which obtain value from their rarity. This example authorises me to offer my heart to the pope : though I am only a worm of the earth before him, it may be acceptable, perhaps, because, of all the popes of this age, to him alone have I offered it. If he asks why such wise, eloquent, and generous men as have been among them, and whose kindness I have experienced, have never obtained this from me, you may answer, because, according to my judgment, he is the only one of them who has done his duty.'

The twenty-fifth of October this year Ni-

cholas Acciajoli, the great friend and patron of Petrarch, died at Naples. His biographer relates that St. Bridget, coming to that city, lodged with dame Jaquette, sister of the grand senechal, and that she said to her one day, 'Your brother will die shortly.' The sister, distressed at this prediction, went to seek her brother, and found him with the queen in good health; but he died a few days after of an abscess in his head. His body was carried, by his order, to that magnificent monastery of the Carthusians he had built near Florence, and to which he had sent a great number of precious manuscripts, intending to establish a library, and finish his days in that delightful spot.

In the beginning of the year 1367 Petrarch underwent a domestic chagrin, which (as it regarded a person of great consequence to the republic of letters after the death of Petrarch, and most writers of that person's life have mistaken many circumstances in it) shall be inserted here from Petrarch's letters: I speak of John Malphigi, known of some by the name of John of Ravenna. His father, though he had neither birth nor fortune, sent him when very young to study at Venice: he was so fortunate as to have Donat de Prato for his master, who conceived a particular friendship for him. Petrarch



took him into his house in 1364. He describes him thus to Boccace :

‘ A year after you went from me, I took to live with me a young man of good character ; he has a lively and penetrating genius, and an extraordinary memory. He learned my twelve Eclogues by heart in eleven days, and recited them without hesitation. Notwithstanding this strength of memory, he has fire and imagination, qualities rarely united. If he lives, I hope he will be something great. He hates and flies from money as much as others love and desire it ; it is to no purpose to offer it, he will hardly receive the necessaries of life. As to the love of retirement, fastings, and watchings, he goes far beyond me. Shall I own it ? By these dispositions he has insinuated himself into my heart to such a degree, that I love him as if he was my own son, and even more ; for my son would be master, according to the fashion of the age ; and this young man is all obedience, more occupied with pleasing me than himself. He acts from feeling, and not from interest : he seems to desire nothing but to improve by my assistance. My familiar epistles were in the utmost disorder ; four of my friends had undertaken to arrange them, but were soon tired of the employment ; he

accomplished this task : there are three hundred and fifty, including this I am writing : you shall have them written by his hand, which is clear and distinct, and not like that of most writers. He has a talent for poetry, and, if he cultivates it, he will succeed admirably. The timidity of his youth gives him an air of embarrassment, and his expression is not easy, but his sentiments are sublime and delicate. He loves to imitate at present, which is agreeable to his age ; in time he will cease to copy, and from the styles of others form one of his own that shall excel them.'

Malphigi seemed to be formed expressly for Petrarch : he took him with him every where in all his journeys and amusements ; and, to attach him still more, he caused him to take upon him the ecclesiastical state. The bishop of Ravenna, who conferred it on him, commanded him to love and honor Petrarch, never to leave him, and to look upon the happiness of falling into his hands as a particular favor of Providence. Petrarch procured for him the certain reversion of a benefice, which should enable him to buy books, clothes, and all he wanted, without recourse to any one, and intended to do much more for him.

This young man, amiable as he was, and the



delight of Petrarch, went into his study, and told him plainly he could not stay any longer with him, and that he designed to go away immediately. Petrarch, astonished beyond measure, dropped his pen, and looking attentively at him, and perceiving in his countenance the disorder of his soul, he asked him what all this meant, and whether he had any cause of complaint against him, his friends, or his servants? John declared he had not; and added with tears, that he well knew he should never be situated so happily and honorably as with him.

‘If this is the case, unhappy young man,’ said Petrarch, ‘if nothing is wanting, nothing displeases you with me, why would you leave me? Where do you propose to go?’ John, with a voice interrupted by tears, replied, ‘I only leave you because I can write no longer.’ ‘How then? Do your hands tremble? does your eye-sight fail you?’ ‘Neither one nor the other; but I have taken such a disgust to writing, that I cannot bring myself to take up the pen again.’ ‘I told you so,’ replied Petrarch; ‘you wrote too much. It is excess that produces disgust. Leave off writing, repose yourself, and you will find that your taste for it will return.’ ‘No,’ replied John, with a

melancholy air: 'I shall never more write for you or any one.' 'So much the better; do not write; I did not take you for my secretary, but my son. You shall read, you shall chat with me; you shall accompany me every where, and be the ornament of my little house.'—'I inhabit a house where I do nothing! Eat bread I have not earned! I have too much heart for that. Your arguments are vain: let me go freely, or I shall depart without your permission.'

Petrarch, hurt by this answer, replied to him with some sharpness, 'Wretched young man! and do you then think so poorly of yourself, that you cannot be useful to me unless you write? You have deceived me: I had conceived a better opinion of your understanding. But what will our friend Donat say, who gave us to each other?' 'He may say what he will; what have I to do with Donat?' 'Ungrateful as you are, is it thus you respect your master, and the father of your soul? When he shall see you without me, he will ask you where you have left your father; he will believe either that I am dead, or that your head is turned.' Petrarch then recalled to his remembrance the exhortations of the bishop, and tried to convince him of his comfortable situation. 'It



is all in vain,' said John; 'nothing can move my resolution.' Saying this, he went out immediately, and directed his steps to the gate; but he could not get off, because the city of Padua is surrounded with double walls and two rivers. He came back very melancholy. Petrarch begged he would acquaint him with the true cause of his departure, promising to let him go, and to give him money for his journey, and letters of recommendation. He still protested that he had no other reason for leaving him than that he named. 'For my own part,' says Petrarch, 'I think he must have been tempted by some other prospect, or that he is turned fool. His eyes wander, and are different from what they were. When he walks through the city, the people point at him, and say, "Do you see that young man? Learning has turned his head." I am just now informed it is his design to go to Naples. Who knows? perhaps from the cinders of Virgil of Mantua may rise up a new Virgil of Ravenna. He has been spoiled with praise: to give him emulation we have fed him with pride. This will be a lesson hereafter to praise none but persons of approved virtue, and not to depend on persons of his age.

Petrarch hastened to put this young man

again into the hands of Donat, hoping he might cure him of this folly. He appeared better at first, but it soon returned. There was nothing fixed or regular in his designs; sometimes he would go to Naples, to see the tomb of Virgil; sometimes into Calabria, to seek the bower of Ennius; in fine, to Constantinople and Greece, to learn the Greek tongue. Petrarch in vain represented to him that he did not perfectly understand Latin; that the voyage was full of peril; that he had no money; and that he would find nothing but ruins at Athens, and ignorance in Greece. When he was thus opposed, he bent his brows, talked in a confused manner, and changed his intention. Every moment his body appeared to be agitated by many contending souls. The conclusion of all was, he went away one day, saying, he would go and see the western Babylon.

In crossing the Appennine, to go to Pisa, he suffered much from violent rains. When he found on his road any one who knew Petrarch, he told them he went to Avignon by his order. Several pitied him, and blamed Petrarch for sending so young a man, without experience or a companion, on so long a journey. When he came to Pisa, he waited some time for a ship;



there was none; he was tired of waiting, and repassed the Appennine amidst a thousand dangers. As he crossed the Taro he was near being drowned; but a person who saw him sinking, drew him out of the water by his feet, almost dead with famine, fatigue, and misery. When he came back to Pavia, he had the air of those shadows that glided round Virgil on the banks of the Styx. Petrarch says on this occasion, 'I no longer confide in this young man; I expect every moment he will leave me again. He will find a little provision I have made him, and the door open. I shall not even attempt to retain him. I know what I ought to think; but you know me, and that there is nothing that I do not pardon and forget; no enemy, whoever he be, that I cannot love, if I find in him repentance and shame: this softness of nature may sometimes be dangerous, but it will never make me blush.'

John, as Petrarch foresaw, did not remain one year in peace; the rage of journeying came upon him again: he determined to go to Calabria, and Petrarch gave him a letter of recommendation for Hugues de St. Severin, whom he knew at Naples, and who held a distinguished rank in that province.

'I recommend this young man to you,'

said he; 'he has genius, and an excellent disposition: seized with the madness of running about the world, he is determined upon travelling for improvement. I cannot blame him for this choice, though I am very sorry for his departure.' Petrarch gave him also a letter for Bruni, the apostolic secretary, as he was to pass through Rome, who took him to his house; on which Petrarch felicitates him. 'You are now,' says he, 'after many tempests, got into a fine port: if you cannot live with this amiable man, I know not with whom you can live. Learn to fix, and remember the proverb, "The rolling-stone gathers no moss." Learn to live with men; you will find some every where. You must live with them or with beasts. You can neither suffer solitude nor the world; this is a great disorder of the soul, which virtue alone can cure.'

These anecdotes concerning Malphigi have been dwelt on, as he was one of the most learned men of this century, and contributed very much to the establishment of letters. He went to teach at Padua after the death of Petrarch: he had there for his disciple Siculo Polontin, who gives him the greatest praise. 'He was,' says he, 'the wisest, most eloquent, and the best master in Italy, both for science and mo-



rals.' Colluccio Salutati speaks of him in the same manner. The republic of Florence invited him to be a professor in that city in 1397; he passed the rest of his life there, and had for his disciples the most learned men of the fifteenth century, the Aretins, Poggès, &c. What he did for the Latin tongue, Emanuel Chrysoloras did for the Greek in that city: and this is the true period of the revival of letters, to which it must be owned Petrarch greatly contributed, if we only consider his forming the genius of Malphigi.

In 1367 Urban removed to Rome. Most of the cardinals were chagrined to leave the fine palaces they had built at Avignon. Five of them would not follow him, but remained at Avignon. The pope went in a Venetian galley, and was escorted by a fleet which the queen of Naples, the Venetians, the Genoese, and Pisans, had sent to carry over the Roman court. When they had weighed anchor, the cardinals who remained at Avignon raised horrid cries, and overwhelmed the pope with injuries. 'Vile pope,' said they, 'impious father, whither are you leading your children?' 'One would have supposed,' says Petrarch, 'he was leading them to Memphis among the Saracens.' The pope despised these impotent as-

faults, and had a rapid course. He stopped some days at Genoa, and arrived in June at Viterbo, where he received the homage of all the Italian princes; and the ambassadors of Rome brought him the keys of the city and of the castle of St. Angelo. There was a commotion among the people at Viterbo, caused by a quarrel of the inhabitants with the servants of some of the cardinals: but the sedition was soon appeased, and the authors of it hung up.

Petrarch was delighted with this event, and wrote a long letter to the pope, which chiefly tends to prove the superiority of Italy to France: in it is the following remark on the French. 'As to what regards the social character, I own that the French have a gay and cheerful temper, and are easy in their manners and conversation; they pay generously, they sing agreeably, they entertain freely; they are, in short, amiable hosts; but we must not seek among them for solid manners or true morality.'

Another of his remarks on the preceding popes is singular. 'I rise always at midnight to sing the praises of God; the silence of the night is best suited to this employment. It is the part of my life when I am most myself, and most delightfully employed. It is a custom I have observed, which has never been in-



interrupted but by sickness, and which I shall ever adhere to. In the office for Lent there is a prayer for the pope, which is to be repeated three times: I declare to you, that formerly, when I came to that part, I could scarcely forbear smiling, though I had more reason to weep and groan. What, said I, shall I pray more frequently for a man who keeps the church in exile, and who leaves the chair of St. Peter empty, than for my relations and benefactors? However, I continued to pray, but it was not heartily. What a difference do I feel at present, since the friend of God has rejoiced the triumphing church by his return! When I pronounce his name, I bow three times profoundly. I say those three prayers with a louder and more distinct voice: and I seem even to wish for them before they come.'

Galeas Viscomti sent for Petrarch in 1368, to desire him to negotiate a peace with the pope, who was in great displeasure at the conduct of Barnabas, and, in alliance with many of the great lords, he determined to exterminate the Viscomtis. He also sent for him to be present at the marriage of his daughter Violante, which was soon to be celebrated at Milan. This lord chose Lionel, duke of Clarence, second son to Edward king of England, for her

husband. Her dowry was two hundred thousand florins, and several places in Piedmont.

This young prince crossed France, followed by all the English nobility, who were eager to attend a marriage where the charms of Italy, and the magnificence of the Viscomtis, led them to expect so many pleasures. The duke was well received at Paris: the dukes of Berry and Burgundy walked before him, and he was lodged in the Louvre. His stay in that city was one continued scene of joy and feasting. The king loaded him with presents. He passed from thence to Chamberri, where the count Amedie, uncle to Violante, treated him kindly, and conducted him to Milan. He made his entry there in May, at the Pavian gate. Galeas went out to meet him with a superb train. Blanche of Savoy, his wife, and Isabella of France, wife to the count of Vertus, his son, appeared at the head of fourscore chosen ladies, all dressed with the greatest magnificence in the same kind of habit. After them came John Galeas, count of Vertus, followed by thirty cavaliers, and thirty equerries in a uniform, mounted upon fine palfreys for the tournaments. The marriage was celebrated in the portico of the temple of St. Mary Majeur, in the sight of a vast multitude. Galeas gave a splendid feast in



the court of his palace. Petrarch was seated at the first table, where, except himself, there was none but princes and lords of the first rank. This was a mark of distinction which at once served to shew the friendship of Galeas, and that he knew what was due to genius, knowledge, and so great a character as Petrarch supported through the world.

John Froissard, known by his history and poems, came to Milan in the train of the duke of Clarence. He had been in England, and had paid his court there to Philippa of Hainault, wife of kind Edward III. He was at this time about thirty, and seized this favorable opportunity of visiting Italy. It does not appear that he was known to Petrarch: he had not then arrived at the fame he afterwards procured; so that, having no rank in the republic of letters, and being hid, as it were, in the bustle of this agitated court, it is not wonderful that Petrarch should have no knowledge of him: but it seems surprising he should not seek a union with Petrarch, who passed for the greatest genius of his age, so desirous as he was of seeing and knowing all great characters: but he tells us himself, he was at that time absorbed in pleasure and in love.

In the midst of these rejoicings Petrarch was

informed of an event which grieved him extremely; the death of his little grandson. 'This child,' says he, 'resembled me in so striking a manner, that he might have been taken for my own. This rendered him dearer to his parents, and to Galeas de Visconti, my lord, who bore the death of his own child with calmness, but shed many tears for the loss of mine. For my own part I could have wept abundantly; but I suppressed a grief that did not become my age. I had erected to his memory at Pavia a little mausoleum of marble, on which I had engraved in golden characters twelve elegiac verses; in these were mentioned his age, two years and four months, and the tender sorrow of his parents.'

At this time Petrarch had the following letter from Boccace:

'My dear master! I set out from Certaldo to come to you at Venice; but continual rains, and the badness of the roads, prevented my pursuing my journey while you were there. As soon as the weather had cleared up, I was desirous of seeing two persons dear to you, your Tullia and her husband, the only friends of yours I was not acquainted with. I met by accident upon the road, Francis de Brogliano, your son-in-law, who has doubtless told you how



it rejoiced me. After the general compliments, and some questions concerning you, my attention was fixed upon his fine figure, his tranquil countenance, and the sweetness of his manners and conversation. I admired your choice. But how should I not admire every thing you do?

‘When I came to Venice, I did not accept the offer of your house. I will tell you the truth: I would not lodge with Tullia in the absence of her husband. I doubt not you will do justice to my manner of thinking in this as in other respects: but others do not know me as well as you do. My age, my grey hairs, my fat, which render me of no consequence, ought to silence even suspicion. But I know the world: they often see evil where there is none, and find traces of its footsteps where it has never been: on the minutest trifle you know a false rumour is often raised, which has as much effect as truth itself.

‘After I had recovered my fatigue, I went to see your Tullia. When she heard me named, she came with eagerness toward me; and, with a modest blush, and her eyes cast upon the ground, paid me the politest reverence; after which she embraced me with filial tenderness. I felt immediately that she was

only fulfilling your wishes, and felicitated myself in being so dear to you. After the conversation that is produced on a first acquaintance, we went and seated ourselves in your garden with some friends who were with us. She then offered me your house, your books, and all that belonged to you, which she pressed me to accept of with as much eagerness as the delicacy of her character would permit. While she was making these offers, your beloved little girl walked into the garden with a step of dignity far beyond her age: she looked at me with a sweet smiling face, though she knew me not. I took her into my arms, quite overwhelmed with joy: I thought I saw my own grand-daughter whom I have lost; only she was something older and taller, and had chestnut instead of flaxen hair. Alas! how many involuntary tears, which I hid as much as possible, did the words, gestures, little questions, and gay appearance, of your dear child cost me on the reflection!

‘I should never end, was I to tell you how many instances of friendship your son-in-law shewed me on his return; the visits he made me when he could not prevail upon me to reside with him; the repasts he gave with a politeness and liberality like yourself. I will only



mention one instance of his kindness. He knew that I was poor; I have never disguised it. When he found me just ready to leave Venice, which was late in the evening, he drew me aside, and, finding he could not make me accept the marks of liberality he offered, he stretched out his gigantic arm to slip money into my hand, and bidding me adieu, ran away, leaving me confused at his generosity, and distressed by the obliging violence with which he enforced it. Heaven grant I may be able to make some return !

Boccace concludes this letter, written in the easy and familiar manner of his Decameron, with a thousand expressions of friendship and veneration for his master.

The war in Italy was at this time carried on with warmth on all sides. Petrarch could not, therefore, return to Venice by land; but he engaged the master of a vessel for a great sum to embark with him on the Po. All the great lords were his friends, so that he had nothing to apprehend from their soldiers. The banditti who infested the highways were his only terror. His friends, however, dreaded his embarkation: and his servants, and the rowers, trembled at every vessel they beheld approach them. Petrarch alone felt no uneasiness; and

in reality he received the greatest civilities from all he met with. Every one said, none but Petrarch could have passed without accident in such a conjuncture; every other vessel would have been pillaged; but they loaded his with game, fruits, and all kinds of provisions, and stopped him on his route only to shew him every mark of respect. His modesty made him attribute the success of his navigation to the insignificance of his condition, and to his known love of peace, 'which is,' says he, 'stamped upon my face.' When he came to Padua, Francis de Carrare went out to meet him; but the rain, and the approach of evening, obliging him to return, he left some of his people with orders to accompany Petrarch to his house, where he sent him provisions for his supper, and after supper went to him, and spent the greatest part of the night in conversation with him.

When Petrarch returned home, he was informed by some letters from Rome, particularly one from Francis Bruni, that the pope desired very much to see him there. Petrarch replied, he hoped soon to have that satisfaction; but the season, and a disorder in his leg, which he had hurt, prevented it at present. Bruni, in his letter, informed him, he had adopted and



joined Collucio Salutati in his office of apostolic secretary with himself, and that Collucio earnestly desired to be acquainted with Petrarch. He had devoted himself to eloquence, letters, and poetry, and studied sacred and profane history under the most learned men of his age: he loved men of letters, and attached himself in a singular manner to Petrarch during the remainder of his life, and expressed every sentiment of zeal and affection for his memory after his death; and, though they never met, Petrarch cherished his affection with paternal love and attention. His answer to the first letter of Salutati is as follows:

‘Old age, which renders others talkative, imposes silence upon me. In my youth I wrote many and very long letters; at present I write very short ones, and these only to particular friends. With respect to you, whom I have never seen, whom I know a little, but love very much, I shall write only a line in answer to your amiable letter.

‘Your style pleases me, and I am flattered by your kind opinion. I know I am unworthy of your praises, and the homage you pay me: but it turns to your glory; for how highly must you love virtue, who run after its very shadow! If, deceived by fame, you treat me

with such generosity, who can boast only an empty name; what would you not do for the man in whom you should behold a real and solid virtue !'

In the letter of *Salutati*, not inserted, there is a great eulogy on the pope, and an account of many noble actions done by him since he came to Rome. In October, 1368, the emperor came to the castle of St. Angelo, and waited there for the pope : as soon as he saw him, he dismounted from his own horse, and, taking the reins of that the pope was upon, led the holy father to the church of St. Peter. *Salutati* speaks of this condescension of the emperor in the following lines to *Boccace* :

' The Roman prelates who followed the pope were charmed with the honor done him by the emperor. The people ran in crowds, transported to see this union of the two greatest monarchs upon earth. The lovers of peace could hardly satisfy themselves with a sight which excited such pious emotions : but those who interpret every thing wrong, attributed to the pusillanimity of the emperor, and a feigned humility, his submission to the pope. The enemies of the church either turned this affair into ridicule, or openly condemned it. For my own part, I was intoxicated with joy



to behold what our fathers have never seen, and which we dared not even to hope; the pontificate in union with the empire, the flesh obedient to the spirit, and the monarch of the world submissive to the monarch of heaven!

The emperor performed also the office of deacon at the mass, where Elizabeth, his fourth wife, was crowned the day of All Saints. He made a shameful peace with the Viscomtis, and in every action expressed the covetous mind for which he was famed; after which he went out of Italy weighed down with gold, leaving in exchange for it a great number of parchments, and the sublime and imperial dignity prostituted. His conduct was such, that Petrarch renewed not his connection with him on this visit to Italy. The pope's entering Rome, followed by two thousand soldiers, was also disapproved by Petrarch; and, though he thought highly of his conduct on the whole, he speaks with his usual freedom of this action.

'It does not,' says he, 'become the Roman pontiff to enter into Rome at the head of an army: his dignity, his sanctity, is a stronger defence than swords and staves. The arms of priests are prayers, tears, fasts, virtue, and so-

briety of manners: the cross of Jesus Christ is the only standard they should set up; it is dreaded by devils, and revered by men: and, instead of drums and trumpets, they should make the air resound with the song of Hallelujah!

The pope at this time conferred the hat on Philip de Cabaffole, the friend of Petrarch. 'Urban,' says he, 'is the only one who knew his merit. I rejoiced at first; but afterwards I pitied my friend, and said, What has he done to the pope, that he should bind him with a chain of gold, when he has most need of liberty and repose?' The pope was fond of Philip; he had left him governor of Avignon, and ordered him to see the walls of that city completed, and that, if any cardinals opposed, he should order their houses to be pulled down.

In the month of May, 1369, the cardinal de Cabaffole went to Montefiascone to the pope, who was gone there to pass the summer. In a conversation they had together, much was said about Petrarch. Urban expressed a great desire to see him, and begged the cardinal to join his endeavours to bring him to Rome. The cardinal wrote him a very pressing letter, which Petrarch was thus obliged to answer:



‘Your letter found me in a languishing state. I have had my fever forty days, and it has weakened me to that degree, that I am obliged to be carried to my church, though it joins my house. I feel that I shall never be well again: I am quite worn out. The holy father does me more honor than I merit. I owe it all to you. Return him a thousand thanks in your name and in mine.’

The pope, thinking this was an excuse, wrote himself to Petrarch. ‘It is long,’ says he, ‘I have desired to see a person endowed with all the virtues, ornamented with all the sciences: you cannot be ignorant of this, and yet you do not come. You make your health your apology. Come as soon as you can without danger or inconvenience. You will find me always eager to behold you, and to procure you that repose of soul after which you have long sighed.’

‘Holy father,’ replied Petrarch, ‘is it possible I should not ardently desire to behold the man whom God has raised to the church, to draw it out of the infamous dungeon it was fixed in? I should not think myself a Christian if I did not love, (but what do I say?) if I did not adore, the pontiff who has rendered so great a service to the church and to myself.

If the Po joined the sea of Tuscany, as it does the Adriatic, I would embark immediately: the calm motion of its waters would agree with my weakness, and you would see me sail into your port seated in the midst of my books. The physicians say the spring will re-establish my health; in this hope I am seeking out horses for my journey. I know that Cato the Cenfor had but one horse and three servants: but our depraved manners will not allow that simple train: we cannot take a step now without being surrounded with horses and grooms. I resist, as much as possible, the torrent of so perverse a custom: two horses suffice me when I am at home, but on a journey I am obliged to have many more for use, and to avoid murmurs. I am more known than I would be, and must sometimes bend a little to the customs of a luxurious age. I shall avail myself of the first gleam of health to obey your orders; but I am persuaded, when you shall see at your feet a weak old man, useless to all but himself, and who only sighs after leisure and repose, you will quickly send him back again to his humble dwelling. My friends write me word you wish to serve me; I doubt not your good will. You have promised to procure me repose of soul; I can receive nothing from you



I should esteem so great a treasure: I should prefer it to the wealth of Cræsus.

‘Riches take peace from the soul; but rarely, if ever, bestow it. I would not set a foot out of my house to gain an empire: I neither desire nor wish for any thing beyond what I have. Love, duty, piety, and gratitude, these are the only springs which can put me in motion. I ask your benediction and favor; and if to that you can add repose, you will fill up the wishes of a poor old man.’

Petrarch passed all the winter in preparing for this voyage; and made his will, in which were the following dispositions:

He forbids any one to weep for his death; ‘because,’ says he, ‘tears benefit not the dead, and they may injure the living.’ He asks their prayers only, and that alms should be given to the poor to pray for him. ‘As to what regards my burial,’ adds he, ‘let them do as they will; it is of little consequence to me where they place my body.’ He makes after this some pious legacies in favor of the religious orders, according to the custom of that age; and he founds an anniversary in the church of Padua, which is celebrated every year to this day on the 9th of July.

He bequeaths to the lord of Padua his pic-

ture of the Virgin, painted by Giotto, 'which ignorant people,' says he, 'discern not the beauty of, but which masters in the art cannot behold without admiration.'

To Donat, the grammar-master at Venice, he gives all the money he had lent him.

He bequeaths the horses he may have at his death to two of the citizens of Padua he was acquainted with, and that they should draw lots for them. To one of them, called Lombard de Serico, he owns the debt of one hundred and thirty-four gold ducats, advanced for the expences of his house, which he charged himself with on a particular occasion, to the neglect of his own affairs. He bequeaths to him a goblet silver gilt, which he made use of to drink water in, 'more agreeable to me,' says he, 'than wine.' He bequeaths to John Abocheta, warden of his church, his great breviary that he gave a hundred francs for at Venice, on condition that, after his death, this breviary should remain in the sacristy, for the use of the priests belonging to that church.

To John Boccace five hundred florins of the gold of Florence, to buy him a winter habit for his evening studies. 'I am ashamed,' says he, 'to leave so small a sum to so great a man;' and he begs all his friends to impute to his for-



tune alone the insignificance of his gifts. To Thomas Barbofi, of Ferrara, he makes a present of his good lute, for him to make use of in singing the praises of God. To John Dondi, physician of Padua, he gives fifty gold ducats for a gold ring to wear in remembrance of him.

He appoints Francis de Broffano, citizen of Milan, his heir; and desires him, not only as his heir, but likewise as his very dear son, to divide in two parts the money he should find; one for himself, and the other for the person he had assigned him. It should seem by this, he would not mention his daughter by name in a public will, as she was not born in marriage. This daughter died in child-bed sixteen years after this, in the year 1384.

With respect to his little estate at Vacluse, he gives it to the hospital in that diocese.

If Francis de Broffano should happen to die before him, in his place he makes Lombard de Serico his heir, who knows his sentiments; and as he has always found him faithful during his life, he hopes he shall find him so after his death. This appears likewise to be a codocil in favor of his daughter.

His last bequest is to his brother Gerard, a Carthusian of Montrieu: he desires his heir to

write to him immediately after his decease, to give him the option of a hundred florins of gold, payable at once, or by five or ten florins every year.

1370. A few days after he had made his will, Petrarch set out on his route. The pleasure with which he undertook this journey to Rome, made him believe he was in a condition to support it; but he soon found he had presumed too much upon his strength. When he got to Ferrara he fell down in a fit, in which he continued thirty hours without sense or motion, and it was supposed he was dead; however, they tried the most violent remedies, in hopes these might recall his senses; 'but I felt them no more (says he, speaking of this afterwards) than a statue of Polycletes or Phidias.'

Nicholas II. of Est, son of Obizzon, was then lord of Ferrara, and the friend and admirer of Petrarch; he was extremely touched with his situation, had him brought to his house, and took the greatest care of him. The physicians, as well as others, thought he was dead, and the whole city was in grief. The news spread to Padua, Venice, Milan, and Pavia: crowds came from all parts of Italy to his burial. Hugues de Est, the brother of Nicho-



las, a young man of great merit, who had a singular taste for the conversation of Petrarch, shewed him the most tender attention and care during his whole illness; he went to see him several times in the day, sent every moment to inquire after him, and had every thing carried to him he thought might contribute to the re-establishment of his health. Petrarch acknowledged he owed his surprising recovery, from death itself, as it were, to the bounty and affection of these two lords; and expressed the most lively gratitude for their friendship. Hugues de Est was fond of tournaments to distraction.

These tournaments were tiltings, or combats with lances; equestrian games, which presented an image of war, and helped to form warriors, and keep up among them military ardour. There were some traces of them in France in the ninth and tenth centuries, mentioned in the chronicle of Taus, and strangers called them the combats of the French.

These warlike exercises passed from France to Germany and England; and the authors of the Byzantine history agree that the people of the east learned these games from the French. Whatever precautions were however used in these games, and though edged and pointed

weapons were forbidden, they were always dangerous, and sometimes they proved mortal; which induced several popes, and some councils, to prohibit them: and this was probably the reason why they were established in Italy later than elsewhere, from the respect paid to the ecclesiastical authority. A Milanese historian says, that Barnabas Visconti was the first who ordered in that city, in the year 1350, tiltings on high saddles, and tournaments according to the custom of France and Germany; after which they soon became the fashion in all the courts of Italy. Hugues de Est was the lord in this country who distinguished himself the most in them, and acquired the highest glory. As his life had been often endangered by this practice, his relations desired Petrarch to try if he could not moderate this passion for glory, which he indulged beyond bounds. Petrarch wrote this young lord the following epistle:

‘I learn with pleasure that you march rapidly on in the path of glory. It is difficult, and it is short. Far from stopping, I would assist, I would accelerate you, in so noble a career. Go; let nothing detain you: confront, if necessary, perils and death: fight for your honor, for your country, for your safety! It



is for these you ought to display your valor, and sacrifice your life; but it is a madness to expose it in such useless and dangerous games as the equestrian; there is more rashness in this than true courage. Renounce these phantoms of war, I conjure you. My age, rather than my judgment, authorises me to speak to you in this manner: you will pardon my temerity, in consideration of my zeal. You have shewn sufficiently of what you are capable in these exercises; it is time to stop: and it would be folly to pursue a course where the peril you run is greater than the glory you can acquire. Leave these games to those men who can do nothing more, who know nothing better, and whose life or whose death are of no consequence. Your welfare is precious to your brothers and your friends, and dear to the republic. A soul like yours ought to be occupied with more noble objects. We nowhere read that Cæsar or Scipio amused themselves with any games of this kind.'

Hugues de Est died soon after receiving this letter, in August 1370. Tournaments, though so destructive to the nobility in France, were not put a stop to till Henry II. was killed in one of them.

When Petrarch was thus recovered by the

hospitality and affectionate care of the lords of Ferrara, he would have pursued his route, but the physicians assured him he could not get to Rome alive. Their threats would not however have prevented his attempting it, if his strength had seconded his desires; but he was unable to fit his horse. They brought him back to Padua, laid down on a soft seat in a boat. His unhoped-for return caused as much surprise as joy in that city, where he was received by his lord and the citizens as a man come back again from the other world. To re-establish his health he went into the country, to a place called Arquà, a large village situated on the edge of a hill, which shelters it from the north, famous for its beautiful vines, and the excellent wines they produce. An everlasting spring reigns here, and there are little villas scattered in a most agreeable manner over this delightful place. Petrarch built him a house at the top of the village, and he added to the vines of the country a great number of fruit-trees.

Petrarch had quitted Venice for Padua, disgusted with that licentiousness of conversation which reigned universally there; and the philosophy of Aristotle, so disfigured by former commentators, and not much enlightened by



Averroes, whose disciples at Venice believed the world co-eternal with God, and made a joke of Moses and his book of Genesis. 'Would the architect of the world,' say they, 'remain so long doing nothing? Certainly no. Its youthful appearance is owing to its revolutions, and the changes it has undergone by its deluges and conflagrations.' They had a great contempt for Christ and his apostles, whom they treated as idiots; the greatest fathers of the church, as enthusiasts; as well as all those who did not bow the knee to Aristotle and Averroes. They called the doctrines of Christianity fables, and hell and heaven the tales of an ass; and finally, they believed that Providence took no care of any thing under the region of the moon. Four young Venetians of this sect had attached themselves to Petrarch, who loved them, but opposed their opinions: this liberty astonished them; and in consequence of it Petrarch was examined in a sort of juridical manner, and pronounced by these judges to be a good man without letters: upon which occasion Petrarch wrote a treatise, entitled, *His Own Ignorance*, and that of many Others; in which he says, 'I care little for what they deny me, if I really possess the good part they allow me to claim.'

Averroes was a Spaniard by birth, who lived in the twelfth century : he was a judge, a physician, a philosopher, and theologist : he knew neither Greek nor Latin history, nor ancient philosophy ; he took the sentiments of Aristotle from an Arabian translation ; and men of learning agree that the Arabian language is very ill calculated to express the turns of the Greek, and the philosophical ideas in this work.

Petrarch had himself formed the design of confuting the doctrines of this book ; but he engaged father Lewis Marsili, an Augustine monk of Florence, to undertake it : he was a man of great natural genius, to which was joined indefatigable study. ‘ When your leisure will permit, I conjure you,’ says he, ‘ to write against Averroes, that enraged animal, who barks with so much fury against Jesus Christ and his apostles. I have neither time nor knowledge equal to such a work ; you have both : employ all your powers in it : Christ himself will assist the champion of his cause ; it is impious for those to be silent who are so able to face this enemy of true religion.’

There was great reason for this pious zeal of Petrarch : these unfriendly doctrines to the peace and salvation of men spread fast, info-



much that Leo X. two centuries after this, published a bull, in which he forbade any, under grievous penalties, to write or teach that the soul was mortal.

Petrarch languished all the summer. John de Dondi, his physician, or rather his friend, (for he would have no physician,) wrote to him that he had discovered the true cause of his disease, and that it arose from eating fruit, drinking water, and from his frequent fastings: he besought him to alter his diet if he wished to live, and to abstain from all salted things, and raw fruits or herbs. 'If you will not believe the physicians,' says he, 'believe experience, and reflect how much you have suffered this year for not following their advice.' Petrarch easily renounced salt provision; 'but as to fruit,' says he, 'which all the physicians look upon as they do hemlock and aconite, Nature must have been a very unnatural mother to give us such agreeable food, of such delightful hue and fragrance, only to seduce her children, by presenting them with poison covered over with honey.'

John de Dondi, who has been often mentioned as the friend of Petrarch, 'had a genius,' says the latter, 'that would have raised him to heaven, if physic had not tied him to

the earth.' He was the greatest physician in all Italy; and attached to Galeas Visconti, who gave him yearly two thousand florins. He was also a skilful astronomer, and the inventor of the famous clock placed on the tower of the palace at Padua, which was considered as the wonder of the age: besides the hours, it shewed the annual course of the sun according to the twelve signs of the zodiac, the motion of the planets, the phases of the moon, the months, and even the holidays, of the year. Philip de Maiziere says, 'It was a sphere all of brass; and that, notwithstanding the number of wheels, which could not be reckoned without pulling the instrument to pieces, the whole of its motion was governed by one single weight.' John wrote a treatise on the baths of Padua, and the cause of the heat of the waters at Albano; and he mentions in it, that his father made salt without sun and without fire, by a sort of evaporation with *Balneum Maris*. He also wrote a treatise on the manner of living in the time of the plague. He loved the conversation and the works of Petrarch, and often went to see him: they had continual disputes about physic, and each remained at the end of them in his own opinion. Petrarch permitted him to visit him as a friend, but not as a physician.



‘When a physician comes in,’ says he, ‘I know what he will say; Eat young chicken, and drink warm water.’

While Petrarch was thus struggling with his disorder and his physician, he learned a piece of news not very likely to forward his cure. The pope took it into his head on a sudden to return to Avignon; that city, in concert with the queen of Naples, and the kings of France and Arragon, had sent him vessels to convoy him thither. Urban gave this reason for his conduct; the necessity of making peace between the kings of France and England: but no one doubted that the love of his country, the difficulty of inuring himself to the climate of Rome, the uneasy and rebellious character of the Italians, and the importunate solicitations of the cardinals, were the causes of it. He was received at Avignon with the greatest demonstrations of joy. St. Bridget told him, ‘If you go to Avignon, you will die soon after: the Holy Virgin has revealed this to me.’ This pretended revelation happened to be accomplished: not long after his arrival there he was seized with a mortal disease, and died in public the 19th of December, 1370, having ordered the doors of his house to be set open, that all the world might be more

impressed by witnessing his death. 'It must have been a very touching and edifying sight,' says a writer of that time, 'to behold a pope extended like a poor man on a sorry bed, with the habit of St. Bennet, which he always wore, his crucifix in his hand, shewing such marks of piety, penance, and perfect resignation. In the course of his pontificate he received two singular honors, which might have discomposed the most philosophic head; and yet he was always the most humble and modest of men. The emperor of the west performed the office of his equerry, and the emperor of the east abjured schism, and acknowledged him as primate of the church.

Petrarch was extremely grieved when he was informed of the return of this pope to Avignon, and was preparing to write to him on the subject, when he was informed of his death. He made this short prayer on the occasion: 'Lord, have mercy on this good pope, and pardon his weakness: pass over the faults of his youth, and this fault he has committed in his old age; since, considering the corruption of the times, he may be justly called a good man.' Petrarch speaks afterwards of his wisdom and sanctity, and that he erred through an excess of kindness to those around him;



and he adds, that he was famous for the miracles he performed.

When this news came to Bologna, to cardinal Anglic his brother, who was legate there, it spread over that city a general grief. They resolved to celebrate a solemn service, with a magnificence beyond example, for a pope who had bestowed such services on their city: all the princes and neighbouring lords were invited to it, and the ambassadors of the principal cities; they reckoned up eight hundred noble persons, all drest in black: the shops were shut up for eight days. Among the princes there was Francis de Corrare, who took Petrarch along with him: his health was more established; he found several friends who were delighted to see him so much better, and who shewed him every mark of distinction.

Cardinal Anglic was adored at Bologna, and through all Italy; there was no lord more beloved, or who governed with greater wisdom and prudence; his temper was perfectly amiable. He was recalled to Avignon by his brother successor, and died in 1388. One of his executors was Audibert de Sade, the son of Laura, for whom he had always had a great affection.

1371. The cardinals chose Peter Roger,

nephew of Clement VI. to fill up the place of Urban: he took the name of Gregory XI. He had great virtues, and great modesty. Soon after his exaltation he wrote to Petrarch, whom he had long known and loved, in the most polite and flattering manner: in which he expressed a great desire to see him, and do him some service. In Petrarch's answer to cardinal Bruni, he says, 'I will receive no benefice with the charge of souls, however great the revenue: the charge of my own is sufficient for me. As to the rest, let the holy father do as he pleases; I shall be always his servant; useless indeed, but faithful and submissive. His generosity may inspire me with gratitude, but it will never augment my zeal and my attachment. If he bestow any office on me, it will be a very short deposit, for I feel myself as a shadow vanishing away. If it will enable me to expiate my sins, the sooner the better. I pray God my purgatory may be completed in this world.'

In a letter to the cardinal de Cabaffole he says,

'I had projected to visit the pope in the spring: my design was to go by water as far as I could, and the rest of the way in short journies by land; but there as been no spring this year; a burning summer has all at once



succeeded a very cold winter. Notwithstanding this, I had packed up my goods, when I was attacked in May with a violent fever, which has disappointed my projects. I have been very ill, the physicians believed me dead; they said I should not live the night over, and the next day they found me cured. 'This has happened to me ten times in the last ten years.' When these violent returns of the fever came upon Petrarch, the physicians came to him from all the cities in Italy, either sent by the princes, or attending him from affection. After many altercations, they agreed he could not live over midnight, unless he was prevented sleeping; and that by taking something for that purpose, he might hold out till morning. No regard was paid to what the physicians said; for he had expressly commanded his friends and servants to do nothing they desired, but rather the contrary: this saved his life, and he slept in the most tranquil manner. The next morning, when the physicians re-appeared, to behold the accomplishment of their predictions, what was their astonishment when they found the man who should have died at midnight, not only alive, but even writing! They contented themselves with saying, 'Petrarch is not like other men!'

In 1371 the pope sent the cardinal de Cabaffole as legate to Perugia. When he took leave of the pope, he said to him, 'Holy father! allow me to recommend to you Petrarch, for the love I bear him, which is not to be expressed: in truth, he is a phoenix of a man.' He went out repeating this with the warmth of a true friend.

The cardinal of Bologna, after his departure, turned both him and Petrarch into ridicule, whom he was disgusted with for the freedom with which he declaimed against the vices of the court. This prelate was intoxicated with great prosperity, and no longer supported the character he bore at the time he expressed so great a friendship for Petrarch, who heard of this, not by the cardinal de Cabaffole, but by accident. 'I am not astonished,' says he, 'at this change. Would you know the reason of it? He is the enemy of truth, and I am the enemy of lies: he dreads the liberty with which I am animated, and I detest the pride with which he is swelled. If our fortunes were equal, and we were together in a place of freedom, I say not that I should be a phoenix, that eulogy would not become me; but he would certainly appear an owl. Such people imagine their wealth, ill acquired, and worse employed, permits them to



say every thing: but there are people who are made eloquent by poverty; and others who are struck dumb by riches.'

When the cardinal de Cabaffole arrived at Perugia, he wrote to Petrarch to congratulate him on the restoration of his health, and the fortitude he had expressed in sickness.

Petrarch was uneasy for him, as he had been ill, that he should undergo the fatigues of a journey, so that his letter gave him double joy. In his answer he expresses a great desire to see him once more before he dies. 'I have loved you,' says he, 'from my youth; you are almost the only friend left me on earth. I have been twenty-four years deprived of your society: now that you are in my neighbourhood, if my ill fate does not pursue me through life, I shall kiss that hand from whence I have received such affectionate letters, filled with salutary advice and holy consolations; and, agreeable to the indulgence you have long granted me, embrace my dear father with tender affection and ardent zeal. I would recall to him our happy village days, when we passed our hours in the woods, so absorbed that we forgot our repasts; and whole nights in delightful discourse, surrounded by our books, till we were surprised by the appearance of Aurora. You

praise my courage in sickness: it is true, my physicians and my friends were astonished to see me gay and tranquil in the midst of pain, without a sigh or a tear; but this was the gift of Heaven; to Heaven, therefore, be the praise!

1372. In the beginning of the spring Petrarch tried to fit his horse, that he might go to see his dear friend the cardinal; but his strength failed, he found he could not bear the least motion. He wrote again to him to express his regret.

‘You are not,’ says he, ‘like most of your brethren, whose heads are turned by a bit of red cloth, and who forget that they are men, and mortal. On the contrary, these honors only make you the more humble; and I do not believe you would change your manner of thinking, was you to be adorned with the imperial diadem.’

This good cardinal, so worthy the description Petrarch gave of him, could not bear the air of Italy; he was sick all the time he was there, and died the 26th of August, 1372. His body was transported to the Carthusians of Bonpas, where his monument still remains.

Petrarch, in a letter to one of his friends, speaks thus of his present condition:

‘I pass the greatest part of the year in the



country, which I have always preferred to cities. I read, I write, I think: thus my life and my pleasures are like those of youth. Having studied so long, it is astonishing that I have learned so little. I hate no one; I envy no one. In that first season of life, which is full of error and presumption, I despised every one but myself: in manhood I despised none but myself: in old age I despise all the world, and myself more than all. I reverence none but those I love; and I desire nothing ardently, but to die with piety and honor. I dread a multitude of servants as I should a troop of thieves; I would have none, if my age and my weakness did not oblige me. I take pains to hide myself, but I cannot escape visits; it is an honor that displeases and wearies me. In my little house on the hills of Euganee I hope to pass my few remaining days in tranquillity, and to have always before my eyes my dead or my absent friends.'

In 1372 war was again lighted up between Venice and Padua. The country round the latter being ravaged by the enemy, Petrarch went with his books, which he considered as his most precious treasures, to shelter himself at Padua. A friend advised him to put his name upon his door, and to fear nothing, for it would be a sufficient protection. Petrarch re-

plied, 'I would not trust to that : Mars is not a favourer of the Muses : I have not so exalted an idea of myself, as to suppose this could shelter me from the fury of war ; I even doubt its advantage to me in peace.' He was advised to quit Padua ; but the bad state of his health, the rigour of the season, and the danger of travelling, prevented him.

Petrarch was solicited at this time for his Italian works : he sent them, and these lines with them : 'I have sent the trifles you ask for ; they were the amusement of my youth ; but they require all your indulgence : my age must excuse the faults of the style, the intoxications of love, and the variations of my soul. It is a shame for an old man to send you such frivolous productions : but with what face could I refuse you verses which are in the hands of every one, and even sung about the streets, and which the world prefers to those solid compositions I have made in riper age ?'

Francis de Carrare, lord of Padua, perceiving the strength of the Venetians, signed a peace on the terms they prescribed, which were very humbling. One of the articles was, that he should come himself, or send his son, to ask pardon for the insults he had been guilty of, and to swear an inviolable fidelity. Francis sent his son, and begged Petrarch to accom-



pany him; and, though he wished to decline it, he would not, having so many obligations to this lord. Accompanied with a great train, they arrived at Venice in September, 1373, where Petrarch was received with the greatest honor. Whether the majesty of the senate awed him, or his memory was lost, Petrarch could not pronounce the discourse he had prepared; but so great was the desire to hear him, that they dismissed the assembly to the next day: he was then more fortunate; he spoke with grace and energy, and was highly applauded. The son of Francis Corrare asked pardon on one knee. The doge raised him, saying, 'Go, and sin no more; neither you, nor your father!'

Francis said one day to Petrarch, 'I am astonished, and I am not astonished, at the good and evil that happens in the world; explain to me this enigma.' Petrarch replied, 'It is not impossible to reconcile the contradiction your genius has proposed. When you meditate on the corruption of men's hearts, you are surprised at the good they do; but it is the rarity of this virtue causes your astonishment, and that ceases when you reflect that it is God who is the author of all good. With respect to evil, it is wonderful to behold the son conspire against the father, the brother against the brother, the

wife against her husband, and the ungrateful man against his benefactor; but this wonder ceases when we review the history of the world, and observe what passes every day in it. If I have explained your enigma, I shall be glad; if I have not, I shall learn it most willingly from you.' This lord loved Petrarch in the tenderest manner; his greatest pleasure was to converse with him, and he went often to see him in his little house at Arqua. He said to him one day, 'You have written something for all your friends but me.'

Petrarch had thought some time of composing something for this lord; but he was doubtful on what subject to fix. At last he composed a treatise on government, in which he might indirectly praise his virtues, and warn him of some faults he had remarked in his conduct. The sentiments of this work would not be at all new to this age, though they were very great for that in which he lived; and he gives a high idea of the talents and virtues of Francis Corrare, in which he agrees with the best authors of that time.

1374. After Petrarch's return from Venice he had not an hour's ease; his fever undermined him very sensibly; and he languished through a tedious disorder, expiring by inches. Nevertheless he made no change in his manner of



living: he passed the greatest part of the day in reading and writing. He happened at this time to meet with the Decameron of Boccace, which he had never seen before, though they had been united twenty-four years. He had not time to read it attentively, but he speaks of it in the following manner in a letter to Boccace.

‘I have only run over your Decameron, and therefore am not capable of forming a true judgment of its merit; but, upon the whole, it has given me a great deal of pleasure: the freedoms in it are excusable, from having been written in youth, from the subjects it treats of, and the persons for whom it was designed. Among a great number of gay and witty jokes, there are, however, many grave and pious sentiments. I did as most people do, I payed most attention to the beginning and the end. Your description of the people is very true and pathetic, and the touching story of Grifildis has been ever since laid up in my memory, that I may relate it in my conversations with my friends. A friend of mine at Padua, a man of wit and knowledge, undertook to read it aloud; but he was scarcely got through half of it, when his tears prevented his going on: he attempted it a second time, but his sighs and sobs obliged him to desist. Another of my

friends determined on the same adventure, and after having read from the beginning to the end, without the least alteration of voice or gesture, he said, returning the book, It must be owned this is a touching history; and I should have cried, could I have believed it true; but there never was, nor ever will be, a woman like Grifildis.'

This was Petrarch's last letter: he closes it by saying, 'Adieu, my friends; adieu, my letters!'

Soon after this he was found dead in his library, July 18, 1374, with one arm leaning on a book. As he had been often seen to pass whole days in this attitude, those who beheld him were not at first alarmed; but on a nearer view, finding in him no signs of life, they gave themselves up to the most bitter grief. It was supposed he was taken off at last by an apoplexy; but as no one was with him, this could not be known. His death caused a general grief and consternation; they came from all parts in crowds to pay their last duty to a man who had been the greatest ornament of their country, and had raised its fame on all occasions. Francis de Carrare, with the bishop and clergy, and all the nobility of Padua, came to Arqua to attend his obsequies. The body of Petrarch, dressed in a flame-coloured cassock,



which was the habit of the canons of Padua, was carried by sixteen doctors on a bier, covered with a cloth of gold, lined with ermin, to the parish church of Arqua, which was hung in a manner suitable to this solemn ceremony. After the funeral oration, which was pronounced by Bonaventure de Peraga, of the order of the hermits of St. Augustine, the body was interred in a chapel of the Virgin, which Petrarch had built in this church. Some time after Francis de Brossano, having raised a marble tomb on four columns opposite the same church, had his body removed thither, and engraved three Latin verses to his memory: the rhyme is their only merit.

*Frigida Francisci tegit hic lapis ossa Petrarcae*

*Suscipe, Virgo parens, animam: fate Virgine parce;  
Fessaque jam terris cœli requiescat in arce.*

In 1667 Paul de Valdezucchi, proprietor of Petrarch's house at Arqua, had his bust in bronze placed on this mausoleum.

In 1630 some persons broke into this tomb, and took away some of Petrarch's bones to sell them. The senate of Venice, enraged at this sacrilege, punished those who were guilty of it with extreme severity, and in the decree against

them expressed the highest respect for the ashes of this great man.

Through all Italy there was a general weeping and lamentation: they all cried out, 'The father of letters is no more, the light of our age is extinguished!' Funeral songs were composed in every city to his memory; and Aretin gives him a distinguished place in the great work he composed; and Francis Socchetti, one of the best Italian poets of that age, composed a canzone, at the beginning of which he represents heaven rejoicing, earth lamenting, purgatory weeping, and hell howling, at his death. It was at Florence, his native country, they felt his death most sensibly; for it was there his zeal, his merit, was most known, and where the most intimate friends he had left resided; Boccace, Collucio Salutati, and father Marfili.

As soon as Petrarch's will was opened, Francis Brossano, his heir, sent to all his friends the small legacies he bequeathed them. When Boccace received his, and the letter wrote with it, he made the following reply:

'When I saw your name, I felt immediately the contents of your letter. I had already heard from public report, the happy translation of our master from this earthly Babylon to the heavenly Jerusalem. My first intention was to have visited the tomb of my father, and to bid



him my last adieu, and to mix my tears with yours : but it is now ten months I have been attacked with a languishing disorder, which has weakened and altered me so much, you would not know me. I am no longer fat nor fresh-coloured, as when you saw me at Venice : my sides are shrunk, my eyes become dim, my hands tremble, and my knees knock against one another. After having read your letter, I wept all night for my dear master : not indeed for him ; his prayers, his fasts, his life, permit me not to doubt his happiness : but I weep for myself, and for his friends, whom he has left in this world, as a vessel without a pilot in a stormy sea. I judge by my grief of yours, and that of Tullia, my dear sister, and your amiable wife, whom I beg you will reason with, as well as console for her great loss, which she ought long ago to have expected : women are weaker than men on these occasions, and therefore require their utmost assistance and consolation.

‘ I envy Arqua the happiness it enjoys, in receiving into its bosom the ashes of a man whose heart was the residence of the Muses, the sanctuary of philosophy, of eloquence, and the fine arts. This village, hardly known even at Padua, will become famous through the world : it will be respected as we respect Mount

Paufilippo, because it contains the cinders of Virgil; Ternas and the banks of the Euxine, for the tomb of Ovid; and Smyrna, because Homer died and was buried there. The sailor who returns from the ocean, and who, charged with riches, sails along the Adriatic Sea, shall fall prostrate when he discovers the hills of Euganee! "They inclose," he will cry out, "that great poet, who was the glory of the world!" Ah! unhappy country! thou didst not merit such an honor! Thou hast neglected to cherish the most illustrious of thy children! Thou wouldst have carested him if he had been capable of treason, avarice, envy, and ingratitude: so truly is that old proverb verified, "No one is a prophet in his own country."

' You propose, you say, to erect him a mausoleum: I approve your design; but permit me to hint to you one reflection; it is, that the tombs of great men ought never to be raised at all, or answer in magnificence to the renown of their heroes! This was what Fortune did for Pompey: she thought it not proper to enclose his ashes in an urn, or to cover his body with the finest marble; but she gave him for a sepulchre all that region which is watered by the sea, from Pelusium to Canope, and the heaven for his monument, that the passing tra-



veller might tread lightly, and dread to trample under foot the body of that great man, who had marched over the heads of those kings he had subdued by his arms. If he had died with glory in Rome, I doubt whether the mausoleum of Artemisia had been equal to his desert.

‘ My master has given me at his death a new proof of his friendship and generosity, of which I have received so many proofs during his life: I accept it with gratitude; I wish I was not in a situation to receive it. I beg of you to inform me what is become of the precious library of this illustrious man. They say there are persons commissioned to examine his works, and decide their fate: I dread lest this office should be given to lawyers, who think they know all things, when they have confused their heads with the chicaneries of law. God preserve the works of my master from falling into such hands as these! Science has no enemies so powerful as ignorant persons; they are always envious, hide the best parts of an author, condemn what they do not understand, and corrupt the whole of his works. Be upon your guard; for if things were to go thus, how irreparable would the loss be to letters in Italy! I heard he had written me a long letter, with a translation he made of the last novel of

my Decameron, as a compliance with my advice, that he would save himself as much as possible from the fatigue of writing : I have not received these kind marks of his attention. I am concerned for the trouble I give you, and beg of you, my dear brother, to consider me as a friend, and entirely yours.

‘ My weakness is so great that I have been three whole days in writing this letter.’

Boccace did not long survive his master ; he died the twenty-first of December, 1375. Coluccio Salutati wrote to acquaint Francis Brossano with this mournful event, and, after giving the greatest praise to Boccace, begs Petrarch’s poem called *Africa*. ‘ I will,’ says he, ‘ defray all the charges of copying it. I know I do not deserve this honor ; but I will venture to say, your putting it into my hands shall not tarnish the glory of Petrarch.’ Francis sent it him, desiring him to correct, and not to publish it. Salutati’s design was to have made several well-corrected copies of it, to send to Bologna, Paris, and England ; and to place one in a celebrated house in Florence for the use of the public. He was prevented by this prohibition, and by finding a chasm in the poem, either placed apart accidentally by Petrarch, or omitted by the copiers. It seems extraordinary that Petrarch should never have shewn Boc-



cace a poem he had spent so much time in composing, and that he should have been so long ignorant of the Decameron, undoubtedly the best work of Boccace, and an admirable satire on the monks. The latter was probably owing to the reverence of Boccace for Petrarch, who could not think of presenting him with a work which, being meant to expose vice, might probably in some parts offend the delicacy and sublimity of his sentiments; and Petrarch would not read his poem to Boccace, because he was not satisfied with it himself.

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## CONCLUSION.

WE have now finished the account of Petrarch: and when a life (if I may so speak) paints itself, it would be a reproach to the reflection of the writer, and a very ill compliment to the penetration of the reader, to attempt to draw it over again by a summary of insipid assertions. I shall therefore only remark one particular, which, with all feeling hearts, will apologize for that unfixed and va-

riable temper so justly ascribed to Petrarch, and this was his tender and ardent passion for Laura, which entirely unsettled him for twenty years, and produced a restlessness in his mind (not formed perhaps by nature in the calmest mould) through every succeeding period of life. Had his profession and happy lot permitted him to have filled up the sacred and delightful relations of a husband and father; could he have brought up with tender and virtuous care the pledges of an honorable affection, (as from the principles of humanity and justice he did the innocent offspring of a dishonorable one,) and thus given a public example of parental virtue; could he have rewarded with his esteem, and soothed with his attention, the cares of a tender mother and a faithful wife; how much would it have promoted his happiness, and heightened his worth! As it was, he frequently led the life of a wanderer, to whom the sweets of a kind and cheerful home are unknown and unhoped for, to alleviate the toils of life, and the distresses of humanity; and with the finest taste for knowledge, the most perfect sympathy with nature, and the most lively and picturesque imagination, he often felt all the languor of discontent. His heart was formed for tenderness; but, alas! it fixed where its affections could not be sacredly confirmed. This uncer-



tain spring of joy at last entirely failed ; and his friends, one after another, followed the same beaten track.

From youth to manhood he was a prey to the keenest sensibility : from manhood to old age he was struggling to recover a calm and virtuous state of soul ; but, often pierced with regret for the hours he had lost in the early part of his life, and with sorrow for the death of those he tenderly loved, he was continually interrupted in this great and noble pursuit. What a striking lesson for youth ! What an awful lesson for all human beings ! to engage them to seize with ardour those fair and unruffled moments that may fix the most pure and sacred principles in their hearts, and lay the foundation of that solid peace through life, which, once lost, we have seen is never perfectly regained ; not even under the influence and direction of the brightest understanding, and the most fervent piety.

Those readers who have been interested in the fortune of Petrarch, will pity his fate, admire his sublime and exalted genius, and revere his humble piety, which their candour, penetration, and sensibility, will draw out to life from this faint and imperfect representation.

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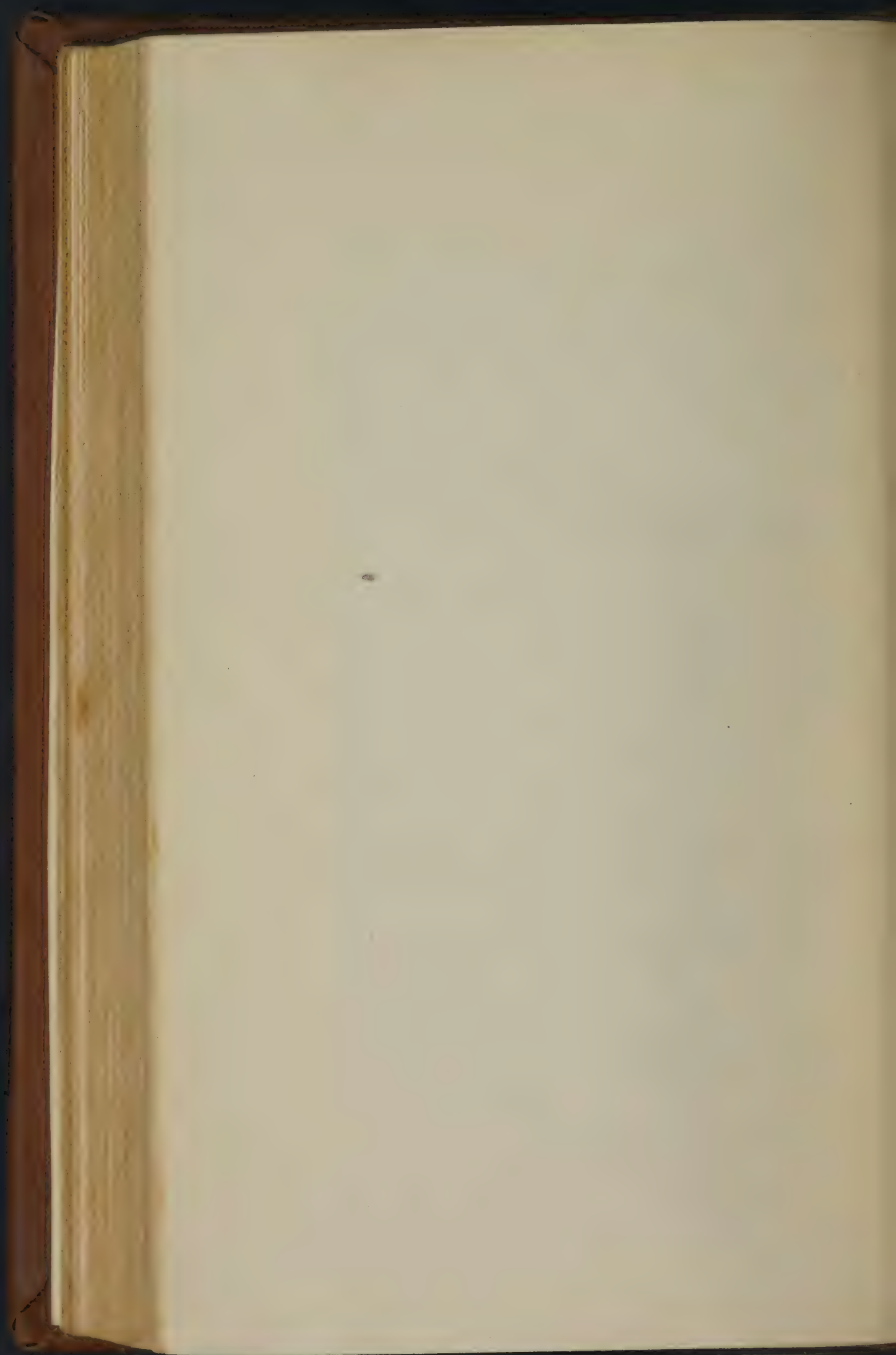
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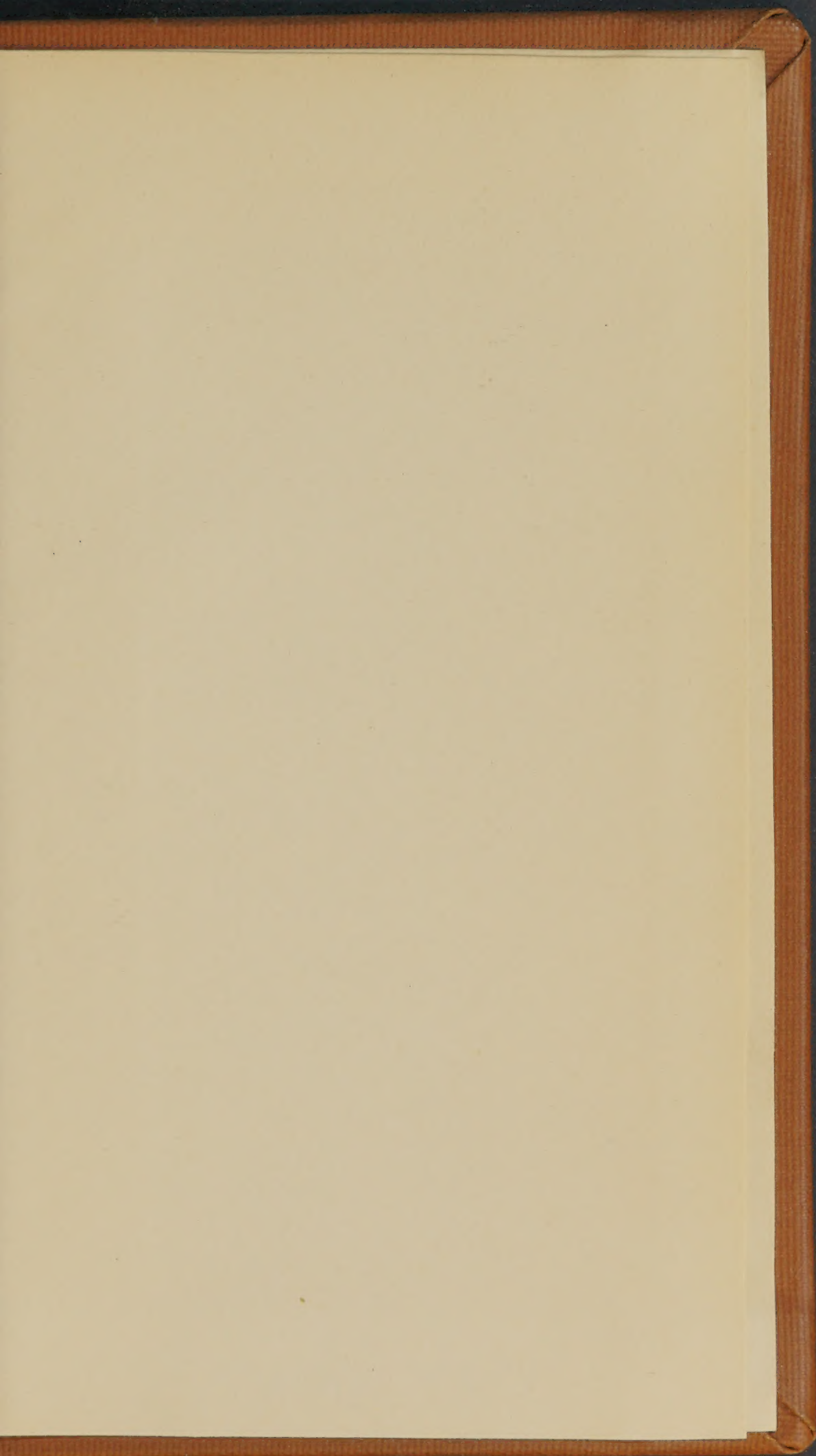
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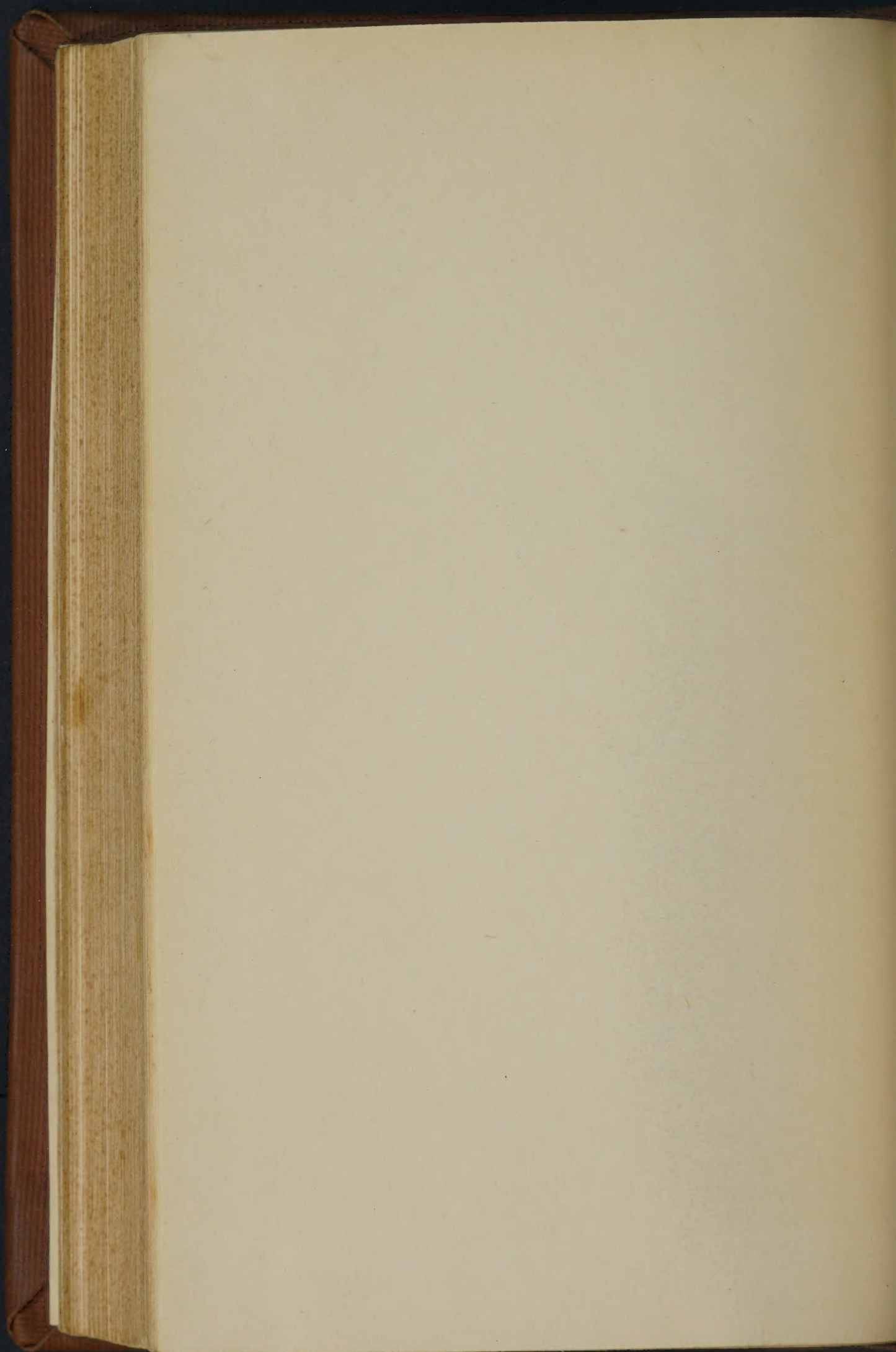












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